

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

JUNE 1918
15 CENTS



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Winona Godfrey



Winifred Arnold



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Dr. Lillian Whitney

"A Summertime Romeo"

is the title of an enchanting romance that Grace Lea Arny has written for the July number of *SMITH'S*. It is about some of the realest people you ever read of, the story hinging upon a situation that is full of humorous possibilities. The author makes the most of them, and the result is a novelette full of mystery, humor, and charm.

¶ Some of the long-time favorite writers for *SMITH'S*, whose pictures appear on this page, contribute short stories to the July number. Winona Godfrey will have "One of Gilly's Ideas," as clever and amusing a story as she has ever written. "Alma Mater," by Ruth Herrick Myers, is a strong story, full of very genuine sentiment. Winifred Arnold will have "The Making of a Slacker," obviously colored by the Great War, and of interest to every woman. Kay Cleaver Strahan and Lucy Stone Terrill will also be among those present with their latest and best stories.

¶ We shall take especial pleasure, however, in introducing to our readers four new writers—all men, by the way—for whom we venture to predict an enthusiastic welcome. They are S. N. Behrman, with "The Heel of Achilles," Charles Spencer Dudley, with "From the Standpoint of Science," H. P. Rhoades, with a theatrical story called "The Big Jump," and Thomas McMorrow, with "Confession," a story that will make you "sit up and take notice."

¶ Then, too, there will be L. H. Robbins, with the conclusion of that remarkably lively mystery story, "Consequences," beginning in the current number.

***All These in the July Number of SMITH'S,
on the News Stands, June 5***

Be a Farmer!



HAVE you a backyard, or vacant lot, now growing flowers, grass or weeds? If so, plant a vegetable garden and be independent. Last year there was a shortage in all crops and the demand was the greatest in history. That is why vegetables are now expensive luxuries.

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Gen. Gibson Says he Feels Every Soldier Who goes to the Front Should Take Nuxated Iron

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York and the Westchester County Hospital, says every soldier and civilian who wants something to help increase his strength and endurance should have the prescription below filled and take Nuxated Iron three times daily as did Generals Gibson, Gordon and Clem and Judge Yoder.

What every soldier most needs is tremendous "stay there" strength, power and endurance, with nerves of steel and blood of iron. To help produce this result there is nothing in my experience which I have found so valuable as organic iron—Nuxated Iron, says Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital (Outdoor Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital. "I have personally found it of such great value as a tonic, strength and blood builder, that I believe if General Gibson's advice were followed many of our fighting men would find it of great benefit. In my opinion there is nothing better than organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for enriching the blood and helping increase strength, energy and endurance."

General Horatio Gates Gibson says Nuxated Iron has brought back to him in good measure that old buoyancy and energy that filled his veins in 1847 when he made his triumphant entry with General Scott into the City of Mexico, and he feels that every soldier who goes to the front should take Nuxated Iron.

General David Stuart Gordon, U. S. A. (Retired), presented for gallant conduct in the battle of Gettysburg well-known Indian fighter. General Gordon says: "Despite my own advanced age, Nuxated Iron has made me fit and ready for another campaign, and if my country needs me, I stand ready to go."

Another remarkable case is that of General David Stuart Gordon, noted Indian fighter and hero of the battle of Gettysburg. General Gordon says: "When I became badly run down this year, I found myself totally without the physical power to come back as I had done in my younger days. I tried different so-called 'tonics,' without feeling any better, but finally I heard of how physicians were widely recommending organic iron to renew red blood and rebuild strength in worn-out bodies. As a result I started taking Nuxated Iron and within a month it had roused my weakened vital forces and made me feel strong again, giving me endurance such as I never hoped to again possess."

"Another interesting case is that of General John Lincoln Clem, who at the early age of 12 years was Sergeant in the U. S. Army and the last veteran of the Civil War to remain on the U. S. Army active list.

General John L. Clem, U. S. A. (Retired) the drummer boy of Shiloh who entered the U. S. Army as a drummer boy at the age of eleven years. He was promoted to be Sergeant for gallantry at the battle of Chickamauga when only 12 years old. He

says that Nuxated Iron is the one and ever-reliable tonic that he obtained most surprising results from its use in two weeks time.

General Clem says: "I find in Nuxated Iron the one and ever-reliable tonic. Two months after beginning the treatment I am a well man."

If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages, there are probably thousands who might readily build up their red blood corpuscles, increase their physical energy, and get themselves into a condition to ward off the millions of disease germs that are almost continually around us. It is surprising how many people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it. If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.

Judge Samuel S. Yoder, Statesman Jurist and for 18 years a practicing physician—formerly Surgeon Major in the Army and now Commander in Chief of the Union Veterans Union, says:

"Nuxated Iron restores, revives and rehabilitates the system. To the man of 70 as I am it is just as certain, just as efficacious as to the youth in his teens."

The above is Dr. Sullivan's prescription for enriching the blood and helping to make strong, keen, red-blooded Americans—men and women who dare and do.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron, which has been used by Generals Gibson, Gordon, Clem, Judge Yoder, and others with such surprising results, is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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No. 3

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 27

JUNE, 1918

Number 3

Consequences

By L. H. Robbins

Author of "The Merlin-Ames Torpedo," "Horace Yomans' Last Story," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

An up-to-the-minute mystery story, full of life and feeling. In two Parts.

PART I.

"Life is a game of consequences."—*Robert Louis Stevenson*.

CHAPTER I.

DEERING BROTHERS, Detectives, Incorporated, are not unaware of the profitableness of advertising. Daniel Deering, senior member of the firm, collaborating with well-known professional writers, has thrilled the reading world with tales of his successful exploits, and Samuel Deering, treasurer of the company, has taken in much money in fees from patrons attracted by Dan's fiction. But there are cases of which the Deerings do not write, and one of these is the Loveland murder mystery.

Six persons have known who killed Harry Loveland. One of them is Harry's millionaire father, to-day a heartsick and broken old man whose millions are worth no more to him than ashes. The second is John Joseph Benvil, whose fortune, made in steel and iron, has been the recent talk of the Midwest. The third is Bush Parwin, lately with the New York Goliaths, now a corporal under Pershing in France. The fourth is Tom Dolan, the

simple-hearted policeman of Wells Lake, Wisconsin, who found out the truth when the Deerings could not see it. Besides these, two women have known the story, and one of them is dead. But the Deerings will never know the facts in the case unless they happen to read this narrative.

On Monday, the twenty-third of July in the year 1917, a young man wrote his name in the register book of the Grand Palace Hotel, in the town of Wells Lake in northern Wisconsin, and asked for a room with a shower bath.

"I can give you the room, young man," said Hiram Gifford, the stout-figured and wheezy-voiced proprietor of the Grand Palace, "but if you want a shower bath, I reckon you'll have to wait till some night when it rains and then get out on the kitchen roof, because shower baths is luxuries that ain't percolated this far north yet."

"And this is a dry season!" the young man exclaimed. "How in blazes do your guests keep clean?"

The hotel keeper looked down at his fastidious patron with a leer of amusement. He saw a person whose height was not more than five feet, whose age was not more than twenty-five years, whose eye was clear, whose chin was square, and whose build was sturdy. He observed, too, that the stranger's clothes were gay in color and fitted him neatly.

"Well, little man," said Hiram Gifford, "we got a sort of bathtub on the second floor that anybody can use that has the nerve. But it's kind of dark in there, and most of our boarders prefers to saunter down to the lake, as a general thing, and dive off the dock. If you can't swim, there's a good public beach about a half a mile out along the camp road. We don't have much of a bathing trade, being just a commercial house, you might say. There's the Maple Inn, though, up at the other end of town, where most of the fashionables go. They might let you have a bath there. But if you was going to the Inn, you had ought to have got off the train at the Central crossing a couple of miles back."

"Put me down for a room, then," said the young man. "I'll take a chance on picking up a bath somewhere else. You don't happen to have a punching bag on the premises, do you?"

"A punching bag!" Hiram Gifford laughed aloud for the first time in his seventeen years as owner and manager of the Grand Palace. "Gosh all fish-hooks! Who ever heard of a hotel with a punching bag? What do you expect to do in this town, son? Punch somebody?"

"Can the kidding," said the young man sharply, "and favor me with my key. I suppose your hay is this year's crop?"

"Hay?"

"That's what I said—hay. The hay in the beds."

"Land of living!" responded Hiram.

"I thought the whole Yew-nited States knowed about our beds. Our feather beds is famous, young man. I don't know as I ought to trust you to sleep in one of 'em, though."

"Why not?"

"Because them feather beds of ours is pretty deep, son, and you ain't so big that you mightn't get smothered in 'em."

He chuckled at his joke, but led the young man upstairs and ushered him into a stuffy bedroom overlooking the main street of the town. The guest looked out through a cobwebbed windowpane. Across the way was the Wells Lake post office. Adjoining was a little church, its clapboards sadly in need of a coat of paint. Behind the church, a blue lake shimmered and sparkled through the churchyard elms.

"I'll have to ask you not to ring for ice water for a day or two," said Hiram, while the young man flung open the window to let in the air. "We've got all kinds of ice here at the lake in the wintertime, but Archie Fox is the only feller that bothers to put it up. He's got a sort of monoply, you might say, and last week the old pauper that's been driving the wagon for him broke a leg, and Archie can't hire nobody else for love nor money, on account of labor being so scarce on account of the war, and he declares he'll be dinged if he'll lug ice for nobody, not if the whole town perishes."

"There ought to be an opening in this town for an iceman, I should think."

"No, there ain't. The summer campers all has their own ice houses, you see, and the rest of us, we've lived neighbors to Archie Fox so many years that we've got kind of used to doing without ice most of the time."

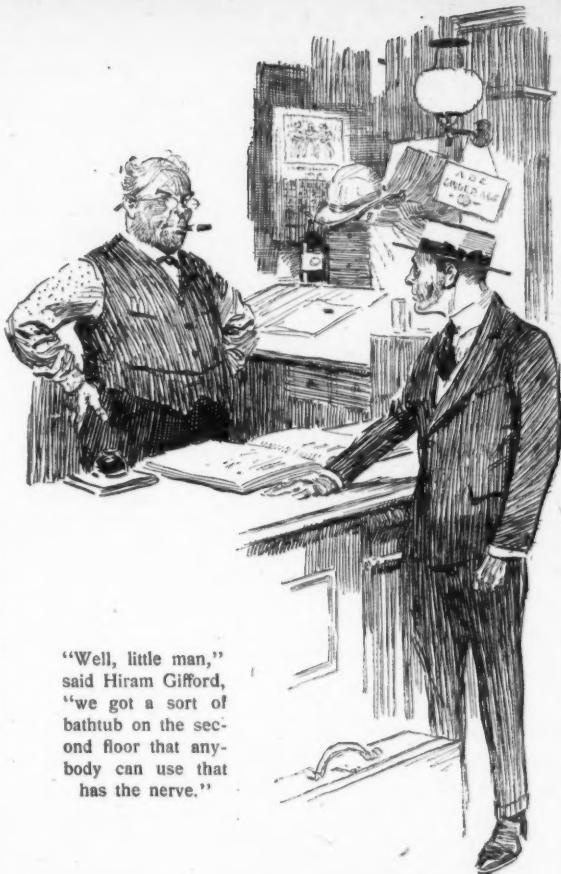
"I see," said the young guest, shedding his coat. "And now, mine host, if you will kindly leave me, I'll endeavor to remove a layer of train dust from my epidermis. See if you can rustle me another pitcher of water."

Returning to the desk downstairs, Hiram looked at the book to learn the name of this new guest, so short in stature, so imperative in manner, and so gifted in the use of long words like "epidermis." All that the young man had written in the register was "B. Parwin, N. Y." Hiram read the signature without gaining any enlightenment. Then he went in search of a spare pitcher of water.

He did not know that there were hundreds of persons in the United States who would gladly have paid him as much as ten dollars for that line of writing. He could not be expected to know that twenty thousand persons in the Comb Stadium, one day within the previous week, had shrieked themselves into acute bronchitis at a home-run drive over the left-field fence from the bat of this undersized "B. Parwin, N. Y."

CHAPTER II.

Bushnell Parwin, better known as "Bush" wherever the sporting pages are read, had been the golden discovery of the previous baseball season. Diminutive, as quick and sure as a cat, a shortstop who stopped the hottest grass cutters and a batter who nailed slow ones and swift ones with equal facility, he



"Well, little man," said Hiram Gifford, "we got a sort of bathtub on the second floor that anybody can use that has the nerve."

had pulled the Goliaths out of the basement in the middle of the present summer and established them at the top of their league. When the papers announced in startled headlines that Bush Parwin, without waiting to be drafted, had volunteered to serve as a private soldier in the regular army, the hearts that mourned must have numbered a million, at least.

His last day at the Goliaths' field had been a carnival and a funeral combined. Strong men were moved to

tears when little Bush Parwin stepped up to face big Abe Cruthers, the Corsair southpaw, for his last time at bat.

Big Abe had beaned Bush in the fourth inning, and Abe's mood was bitter now, for the New York rooters had used him savagely.

Bush faced him, still as a statue. The first pitched ball cut the plate.

"Stur-roike!" called the umpire.

The crowd groaned.

"Tuh!" The fateful right hand went up.

The stadium buzzed, then settled quickly into a hush as ominous as death itself. Stockbrokers and messenger boys held their breath. Every manly heart in the crowd knew what the moment meant to Bush Parwin.

But Bush was not to start for France under the cloud of a strike-out in his last time at bat. Old Father Abraham Cruthers wound up for the third strike. The crowd might boo him here in New York, but out in the Corsair city brass bands would meet him at the station.

Over came the ball—a long way over, indeed, for it bounded from the catcher's upward-reaching mitt and caromed against the chicken wire in front of the upper tier of boxes, while the chickens behind the wire shrieked with feminine delight. Again Cruthers loaded up, but his wild pitch had broken the tension, and a thousand agonizing grunts greeted his elephantine ears.

The rest is history—how the ball took the left-field fence on the fly; how little Bush Parwin one-stepped around the bases, while Gerrish, the Corsair left fielder, lay down on the grass and pretended to give up the ghost; how the crowd swarmed out upon the field and carried Bush in triumph on its shoulders; how a furniture van was required to cart away the floral horseshoes that had brought him his good luck; how Manager Corlies offered one hundred dollars in cash and no questions asked for the return of the ball, so that he

might add it to his trophy collection; and how seventeen patrons of the national game applied for the reward.

Thus gloriously Bush Parwin ended his baseball career. But he did not proceed to the recruiting station, as the newspaper photographers had hoped. Bush had a matter of private business to wind up before attending to the Teuton hordes—a matter concerning which the press and the public had not been informed.

With a suit case in his hand, he slipped out of the club hotel and took a subway train, as if he had been an ordinary mortal instead of the most talked-about man in New York. Leaving the subway in Brooklyn and walking a square or two, he entered an apartment house, ascended the stairs to the third floor, and pressed a bell button. Within, light footfalls sounded and a child's voice called, "Here's Nunkie Bush!"

The door opened and a baby boy in rompers tackled Bush around the legs with every sign and sound of gladness. A little, gray-haired, smiling woman came, drying her hands on her apron, and cried: "Bushnell, boy, we're all so proud of you!" She kissed him with motherly tenderness on the cheek, while the baby continued to assail his legs as if Nunkie Bush had been a burglar instead of a little boy's jolly good uncle.

"How's Paula?" Bush asked, picking up the youngster and setting the delighted child astride his shoulder.

"Paula is the happiest of us all," whispered the mother. "She's read everything the papers had to say about you. We sent out and bought them all. But she's dreadfully worried, Bush, about your trip West."

From a room at the distant end of the hall a voice called:

"Here I am, Bushnell."

"Go in and see her," said the gray-haired woman. "I'll have supper ready in a minute."

"Giddap!" cried the baby, using his nunk's hair for bridle reins. Down the hall they went and entered a room where a young woman lay on a couch beside a window. The window was open to the last hues of a crimson sunset, and a cool breeze came in from over the bay.

It was a frail little woman who lay on the couch, scarcely more than a child in size; but her face was beautiful in its aureole of golden hair, and her eyes were bright with welcome. He bent down, weighted though he was with his young rider, and kissed her.

"Hello, sis!" he said gayly. "Gee, sis, you ought to have been there!"

"I've read all about it," she answered, pointing to a heap of evening newspapers beside the couch. "It must have been wonderful, Buddie."

"It made me think," said he, "of that first night of yours in 'Queen Bonnie.' Do you remember how crazy the house went after that second act? And the bouquets you got? Well, I'll bet I beat you to-day. Thirty-four million dollars' worth of posies, sis—all horseshoes—and they're coming over in a dray for you to admire."

He put the child down now and sat beside her, taking her thin, white hands in his hard, brown paws.

"Listen, sis," he said. "You know where I'm starting for to-night, don't you?"

"Mother has told me," and her eyes filled with tears. "I hope you're doing right to go. I hope that—that nothing terrible will happen."

"Don't you worry about anything happening, sis. It won't happen to me, anyway."

"I'm not afraid for you, Buddie. It's somebody else."

"Harry Loveland?"

She nodded.

"He's safe enough from me, sis, as long as you care for him. But——"

"What, Buddie?"

He did not answer her, but turned to the window and looked down at the harbor lights gleaming in the early dusk.

"Bushnell."

"Well?"

"What do you intend to do when you see him?"

"Tell him the truth as straight and as hard as I can put it."

"And then?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, but, Bush, you won't do anything that might—might make him too proud ever to come back?"

He turned from the window and saw that she had half risen, her lips parted, her eyes wide with anxiety.

"There, there, sis," he said soothingly, and patted her hand, "I'm not going to be such a bad brother to you as all that."

"Then why do you go to him at all?"

"Because he needs to be told how he looks in the eyes of a man—that's why, sis. He's never been told. You've done all you could and it hasn't worked. Now I'm going to try. I'm going to jar the swell head out of him and make him feel small if anybody on earth can do it. I'm going to let him see what a cur dog he is. I ought to have broken his neck long ago. You know why I haven't. But don't cry, sis. Please don't. This is going to be just a sort of surgical operation, tough, but necessary, and maybe you'll thank me for it, and so, maybe, will Harry Loveland. Let's say no more about it to-night. Where has that Buster gone?"

With a cheery grin to his sister on the couch, he went to look for the little ruffian who called him "Nunk'y Bush."

At midnight that night, Bush Parwin rode out of the Pennsylvania Station in an upper berth of a Chicago train. In the afternoon of the second day following, he arrived at the festive little summer town of Wells Lake, in Wisconsin, where the name of "B. Parwin, N. Y." had no meaning whatsoever for

Hiram Gifford, proprietor of the Grand Palace Hotel; though, had Mr. Gifford possessed an active memory, he might have recalled that the name of Parwin had once meant a great deal in Wells Lake.

CHAPTER III.

Having washed as well as any one could wash in Hiram Gifford's Grand Palace Hotel, and having hung up the single towel to dry against such time as it might be needed again, Bush Parwin strolled out into Main Street to give Wells Lake something that he would have called the "once over."

"A nice little one-horse town," he commented to himself, "only where's the horse?"

Man's faithful beast of burden had indeed become a rare bird in Wells Lake; the useful and ubiquitous flivver had taken its place.

Having inspected the right-hand side of the way, Bush crossed the street and descended the hill to the post office, where he encountered Thomas Dolan, the village policeman.

"Officer," said Bush, "is there a party by the name of Loveland in your city?"

Thomas Dolan grinned, for nobody within his recollection had ever before honored Wells Lake by calling it a city.

"Loveland's place is up at the top of the hill. Follow the east road, there. A big house with white pillars in front."

"Feather pillars?" queried Bush.

"No," replied Dolan. "But the house has wings."

"Then I must hasten," said Bush. "I thank you."

The house with the pillars was easy to find; it was the biggest and the handsomest house in town, as Bush had expected. On the piazza a white-haired woman, delicate of feature, looked up from her knitting as Bush approached the steps.

"So that is his mother," Bush thought. "Poor lady!"

With hat in hand, he answered her look of inquiry.

"I've come to see Harry Loveland, ma'am. Is he at home?"

"Just follow the walk around to the gardens. I think you'll find him there," Mrs. Loveland answered.

Harry Loveland, attired in a sport shirt, khaki riding breeches, and leather puttees, met the visitor at the corner of the porch.

"Well, sir?"

Bush looked at the sport shirt, at the riding breeches, at the puttees, then back up Harry's lithe six feet of length to the bronzed and handsome face that frowned down upon him.

"Step around here out of earshot of the porch, will you, please?" said Bush.

"Why? What's the matter with right here? What do you want?"

"I don't care to hurt your mother's feelings by letting her hear what I have to say to you. Come back here in the shade."

They sat down on a bench under a grape arbor.

"My name is Parwin—Bushnell Parwin. Ever hear the name before?"

"Oho!" laughed Loveland, relaxing from his attitude of mistrust. "I thought you were a tree agent, maybe, or a lightning-rod man. So you're only Bushnell Parwin, eh?"

"You're a humorous cuss, aren't you?" said Bush. "And a handsome brute, too. I can understand now why the poor girls go dotty over you."

Harry froze up into the reserve peculiar to some of the sons of rich men.

"Now you look handsomer than ever," said Bush, "you lying, sneaking, yellow-livered coward, you!"

"What the devil do you mean by that kind of talk?" Loveland's face was red. "I know who you are. You're Paula's brother, of course. But you'll behave yourself as a gentleman while you're here or I'll throw you into the road—you grafter!"

"Grafter!" It was Bush Parwin's turn to redden.

"That's the word for you, isn't it? You know now what I think of you and of your whole tribe. If you don't like 'grafter,' how about 'blackmailer'?"

Bush rested his arms across his knees and looked down at the gravel path beneath his feet.

"Grafter!" he repeated, half to himself. "Grafter! So that's the way you think of my sister, your wife, eh? That's the dope, is it?"

Harry made no answer. With knees crossed and arm laid along the rail of the bench, he leaned back and looked contemptuously down at the boyish little man beside him.

"Grafter!" Bush mused. "I begin to see. You think Paula's a grafter because she won't give you a divorce?"

"What else can I think? If she isn't after my money, why has she kept me tied up for three years?"

"Have her lawyers offered to settle the suit for money? Have they bargained with you in any way, or hinted that you might buy her off?"

"Of course they haven't. They're too foxy for that. They're waiting for a fat cash proposition from me."

"You've made them several propositions. Has it done you any good?"

"Evidently I haven't come up to your sister's price yet. Meanwhile, she's living fairly comfortably, I understand—she and the rest of her tribe—on the allowance the courts compel me to pay her."

"Loveland," said Bush, straightening up and turning to his brother-in-law, "I didn't come here to quarrel with you. I came to tell you the truth—the plain, honest, American truth—something you'll not get from your law people. You talk about Paula's price. Well, she has no price, and if you don't know that by now, then you haven't got the brains or the soul of a man."

Harry laughed incredulously. Bush

clenched his stout little fist, but continued quietly:

"Paula's a little fool. We've all told her you're no good. We've all tried to make her see that thirty cents of your money would be worth a darn' sight more to her than a husband like you. Her lawyers want her to accept your last offer of settlement. Personally, I advise her to let you go and to throw your dirty money after you—your 'allowance' that you mention. Oh, you'll get it all back, don't worry. Do you suppose she's ever touched a cent of the stuff? Not on your life! Not while I can pull down enough honest coin to keep her going. Would you like to hear something to make you ashamed of yourself? Well, sir, for two years I've supported your wife and your child. That's where my world-series money went last year, and a third of my contract pay, besides. Paula and your little boy got it. And now that I've cut out baseball to join the army, she'll draw my soldier pay and live on that, and on what I've got laid by in the savings bank. And then you call her a grafter—you big, spoiled lady-killer, with your musical-comedy clothes! Gosh! Don't you suppose anybody's got pride in this world except you rich people?"

Loveland was on his feet.

"Is that all you have to say?" he asked, conquering an impulse to annihilate his vulgar little baseball-playing brother-in-law on the spot.

"No, it isn't. Sit down," said Bush. "I suppose all this bores you dreadfully, doesn't it? But I haven't come to the point of my errand yet. I didn't come out here from Paula. I came on my own hook. I'm going to France next month. I may not come back, and I don't want to leave things the way they are with Paula. So I've taken my pride in my hand and I've come to tell you that Paula's heart is just about broke, Loveland, wearying for you, and long-



"Now is as good a time as any," said Bush, peeling off his coat.

ing for you to come back to her, and believing all the time that you will come back to her if she can only keep on hoping long enough. You think she'll let you go for a price, but that's where you're dead wrong. She doesn't want your money; it's you she wants. And now that I've had a good look at you close up, I can understand why she's such a fool."

Bush's tone was still quiet and a little sad.

"If you were broke and down and out and sick abed, Loveland, that fool girl would come back to you if you sent for her. You and me can sneer at women all we like—and I guess we've both seen a good deal to sneer at—but we don't

know it all. I guess there's kinds of love that men of our sort can't appreciate, and that's the kind Paula's is. Maybe she told you how she started out on the road where you found her. She was just a kid in high school, down South, and our old man died, and Paula got her a little job in a vaudeville house up in Cincinnati, she and mother boarding, while I went to playing baseball in the nearest league that would have me and sending them a couple of dollars a week to help out."

Loveland yawned. Bush went reminiscently on:

"First thing I knew, a scout from a big Eastern circuit had spotted her, and

I quit my job with the Tallahosie team and met her in Cincinnati, and the three of us traveled to New York, all the way by day coach because we couldn't afford a Pullman, Paula sleeping with her head on my shoulder the whole length of the State of Pennsylvania, and people taking us for kids, we both were so small. Well, you know what happened in N. Y. You know about the pony ballet where she made the hit of the town, and about that 'Queen Bonnie' play that old Harris fixed up for her, and the Western trip where you came butting in to spoil it all. You know all that."

Harry Loveland looked at his watch significantly, but Bush was in no hurry.

"You know how you married her, so grand and all. You know how you sent her to the hospital and forgot her, after the little fellow came. You know about that well enough. But you don't know something that I could have told you a long while ago and saved you a lot of expense. You don't know that all the sneaks in the United States can't find a black mark on that little girl's record in a million years, and that's one of the things I've come out here to tell you."

"Is tha-at so?" drawled Harry. "How about the fellow Paula was so chummy with all that pony-ballet year in New York?"

"The fellow that used to meet her at the stage door every night and take her home to keep her out of the hands of Johnnies like you? I'll tell you all about him, Loveland. That fellow was Paula's grafting, blackmailing brother—meaning me."

"You?"

"I was the guy, Loveland, and when one of your snoops from the Deering Detective Agency offered me a thousand dollars last winter to tell him who the fellow was, I took a thousand dollars' worth of pleasure in sending him to the dentist with two of his front teeth missing. Maybe you remember about that?"

Harry Loveland, his face set and sulken, made no response. Bush Parwin rose.

"Well, Loveland, I've delivered half of my message. In plain United States, Paula's reason for fighting you in this divorce that you want from her is that she still loves you, no matter how much of a mucker you are."

Loveland started. In his dictionary the word "mucker" meant a youth who does not attend college.

"The second half of my message is this," Bush continued, standing squarely before his rich and comely brother-in-law. "You may not ask Paula to come back to you—that's up to you—but un-

less you'll agree to call off the detectives that you've hired to watch her, I'm going to beat that Apollo face of yours into a jelly! Get me?"

Now Harry Loveland laughed indeed.

"You little sawed-off bantam," he hooted, "I've a notion to wring your neck!"

"Now is as good a time as any," said Bush, peeling off his coat.

Loveland smiled at him with the easy contempt of an athletic six-footer who knows his strength.

"It would be a shame to do it," he said. "I'll let you live. But I'll tell you this, you little grafter." His eyes flashed with malice. "I'll give you twenty-four hours to get out of town. This is my town; understand that. If I catch you here after to-morrow, I'll have you kicked the whole length of Main Street, and thrown into the lake, besides! Let that percolate through your skull, shrimp!"

"Twenty-four hours is too short a time to spend in this pleasant village," said the shrimp, tucking his coat under his arm. "I can't possibly see all the local points of interest before the end of the week. It happens, however, that I want to leave by Saturday morning, so as to show up at the recruiting office in New York bright and early on Monday. That'll allow you four days to decide whether or not you care to remain in the beauty class. I'll give you till Friday night at sunset, Loveland. After sunset that night, you'll want to wear a catcher's mask, because something serious is going to happen to that aristocratic Roman nose in the middle of your proud young face. Friday night at sunset, remember, I'll be looking for you if you haven't come looking for me first. I'm at the Grand Palace. Let me again impress the thought upon you that if you haven't brought me a promise between now and then, you'll never again get a second look from any

girl on earth except Paula, after I get through with your face on Friday night. Friday at sunset, brother-in-law."

Bush crossed the Loveland lawn, sprang lightly over the privet hedge, and rambled away down the street, whistling "Over There" as if he hadn't a care in the world. Loveland gazed after his retreating form and laughed. Then he went indoors. Emerging presently in white flannels, he descended the hill to the Loveland boathouse, stepped into his power boat, the *Wasp*, and laid his course westward down the lake toward an island framed in the sunset, where entertainment more agreeable than the scoldings of an outrageous little brother-in-law awaited him.

CHAPTER IV.

In the summer of 1917, the little passenger train that plied back and forth thrice daily between Wells Lake and Lambert Junction could be depended upon to arrive at the lake a half hour late every time. The summer people complained bitterly of the poor railway service—as if a delay of thirty minutes or so meant any great hardship to folk who spent all day in doing nothing of importance.

The townspeople understood that the tardiness of the train was due to the fact that the wealthy people who made Wells Lake their vacation headquarters had their camp supplies—their groceries and gasoline and furniture—sent up from the city by express; thus evading the embargo which, for the sake of national effectiveness in war time, had been imposed upon freight of a non-essential character.

From the middle of June, the passenger train, consisting of a day coach and a combination baggage-and-smoking car, drawn by a wheezy locomotive that ought to have been housed in a museum, did a rushing business for the sake of the summer visitors, and the

weariest man in Wisconsin was Charlie Buford, the perspiring young express clerk whose duty it was to transfer the summer people's victrophones, porch hammocks, motor-boat engines, lawn tents, canoes, and other trifles from the through train at Lambert Junction to the Wells Lake express car.

Often, indeed, the express matter was so vast in quantity that it overflowed the baggage car and had to be carried in the aisle of the smoker, to the discomfort of drummers, lumbermen, and other rough persons who could not be expected to know how necessary it was that the summer people at the lake should be supplied with things to make them happy.

So it came about that on Friday, the twenty-seventh of July, the train due to reach Wells Lake at seven-fifty in the evening was a half hour late. Before its whistle was heard, the afterglow of sunset had faded out of the sky and left the moon to illuminate the rippling water of the lake, the motor-boat docks, the roofs of the town, and the wooded hills around.

Up to one of the docks a speed boat of the hydroplane type slid from the silvery lake. There was a rumbling of powerful engines, a churning of water astern, and the boat came to rest against the bumpers as easily as a great bird alights from flight. Out of the boat leaped a young woman, dark-haired and athletic, and made fast the stern line, while another young woman clambered to the dock and passed the bow line around a cleat, executing a double hitch as expertly as if she had been a sailor.

Other girls followed them out of the boat and stood in waiting, while a bare-headed, bare-armed, broad-shouldered young man lifted the hood in the bow of the boat and turned the flash of a pocket lamp down among the engines. In a moment he closed the hood, sprang to the dock, and strode landward, surrounded by his cargo of summer girls.

Gay and pretty and costly their dresses looked, even when viewed in the uncertain light of the moon, and their voices were gay and laughing.

Up through the little alley leading from the docks the party went, chattering, bantering, giggling, and jostling. In Main Street they turned toward the post office, two of the girls clinging to the young man's arms, the rest close at his side, all save the black-haired girl, who walked alone.

Main Street, in the neighborhood of the post office, bore an aspect almost metropolitan. Motor cars, a score of them, thronged the post-office side of the way. The oil lamps of the post office shone feebly out through the windows upon the waiting crowd on the sidewalk, and the gasoline torch of a popcorn stand at the curb contributed a bright spot to the picture.

"The train's late, of course," said the young man of the speed boat. "Come along to Garner's."

The cluster of summer girls, with the young man in their midst, parted the sidewalk crowd as their motor boat had lately parted the waters of the lake, and pressed farther up the street toward the Wells Lake pharmacy, where Doc William Garner, registered apothecary, dispensed soda water, ice cream, post cards, camera supplies, tobacco, souvenir baskets, candy, toy sailboats, college pennants, hair goods, and umbrellas. Somewhere in the rear of the store William Garner had a supply of drugs, and occasionally he filled a prescription, but he complained frequently to his fellow villagers that the two years he had spent in attending a school of pharmacy had been wasted.

In the Garner doorway stood a short, stocky young man. He held a stout club under his arm and eyed the speed-boat party with interest. Long enough he stood barring the way to catch the eye of the tall fellow in the middle of the group and to receive a sudden glare

from that handsome person. Then he stepped aside. Into Doctor Garner's miscellany store trooped the tall young man and his noisy following and, taking possession of one of Doctor Garner's tables, called for seven maple-walnut sundaes with chocolate sauce.

"Seven?" queried a thin young woman, counting mouths. "Harry must intend to eat two himself, because there's only six of us."

"Six?" the young man echoed, and counted for himself. "Somebody's missing. Where's Maisie?"

A plump, fair-haired young woman in a pink hat and gown to match—the young woman who had enjoyed Harry's left arm all the way from the dock—rolled her eyes and said, in a tone of indifference as cool as the cream she expected to eat:

"I guess we lost her at the post office. She had some letters to mail."

"We can't eat without Maisie, that's a cinch," declared the young man and abruptly left the table, stopping on his way to the door to reach into William Garner's tobacco show case for a package of cigarettes, while Garner grinned at him from behind the soda fountain.

"Come on back, Harry," the plump young woman called after him. "Maisie will find us. Don't worry."

But the young man paid no heed to her words or to the pouting look that accompanied them. Out of the door he strode into the half darkness of Main Street. The young women at the table exchanged glances of mutual comprehension. The thin one shrugged her thin shoulders, the plump one sighed; then they all sighed.

William Garner came bustling with his tray over his head, waiter fashion, and placed their sundaes before them, then hastened back to the fountain and returned with glasses of ice water. The youngest girl in the party, a very fat girl, began to eat at once. The plump girl in pink turned to her with "Hazel,

you pig!" To which the pig responded, "Aw, Bert, shut up! You've been snarling all day. Now have a heart." So saying, the pig proceeded to soothe her injured feelings with the confection before her. The others waited for their host's return.

From the street outside came sounds indicating that the train was in. The post-office handcart rattled past, carrying the evening mail from the station. Danny Weebles, the village newsboy, lugging a bundle under his arm, tossed Doctor Garner's evening paper in at the door. The pyramids of cream in the glasses on the table succumbed to the summer heat and settled down into soupy, chocolate-streaked puddles. The pig had finished her portion and began to crave another, and still Harry had not returned.

The plump girl in pink pushed back her chair.

"This is the limit!" she said. "Come on."

"Aw, Bert, wait a minute longer," wailed the pig. "Give Harry a chance. Besides, who's got any money to pay Mr. Garner? I haven't, I know." Of a sudden her voice fell to an awed whisper. "For Heaven's sake, Bert, look who's here!"

A tall man of middle age had entered the store from the street and now stood staring at the group around the table. His city dress and his traveling bag showed that he might have been a passenger on the train that had just arrived. For a moment he stared; then he lifted his hat and bowed in polite, but unsmiling greeting, spoke a word to William Garner, and left the store.

"Benvil!" gasped the pig.

"Why didn't you speak to your hubby, Bert?" asked the thin girl, with a twinkle of spite in her eyes.

"Mind your own business!" answered the girl in pink.

Rising, she said to the storekeeper, "If Mr. Loveland comes back, tell him

we got tired of waiting for him. We'll meet him at the boat after the mail is opened."

"Very well, Mrs. Benvil, I'll tell him," replied William Garner; and he jotted down in his account book seven sundaes and a pack of cigarettes against Harry Loveland.

The five young women departed. Four of them looked disgusted, but the face of the very fat girl wore a smile of contentment that lasted until she had passed through Doctor Garner's screen door; at which moment a sharp explosion sounded from the direction of the automobiles assembled in front of the post office.

"Oh!" screamed the very fat girl, with a startled jump. Here and there in the street other women shrieked.

"Be still, ninny!" spoke the girl in pink. "It's only a backfire. Behave yourself."

"But, sister, I can't help it if I have nerves, can I?"

"Nerves!" retorted the censorious sister. "What do you know about nerves?"

That other women than the fat girl had nerves was clear from the sound of prolonged, hysterical sobbing that came from a motor car near by. The sidewalk crowd pressed toward the car in curiosity.

Therein two elderly women were seated. They were the Misses Wickmire, summer people, sisters of the celebrated Doctor Thaddeus Wickmire, whose Elixir of Life had made a fortune for him, and for them, in the good old days when that sort of thing could be safely done. Miss Yetta Wickmire, the elder of the elderly sisters, seemed now to be in dire need of a dose of her brother's famous remedy. Her screams filled the street and brought Tom Dolan, the town policeman, elbowing through the crowd to discover the cause of the disturbance.

"Lady fainting," he said to a stocky

young man who stood beside him.
"Fetch some water."

Through the crowd the stocky young man bored, and dashed in at Doctor Garner's door. Back through the crowd he shoved to the policeman's side with a glass of ice water from the Garner fountain. The ice water did its work; the excited Miss Wickmire subsided, and the crowd dispersed, leaving Tom Dolan and the stocky young man to grin at each other.

"Women are queer critters," remarked the policeman.

"You said it," laughed the other, and then Dolan recognized him as the stranger who had called Wells Lake a city, one afternoon earlier in the week.

Back to the drug store Bush Parwin went with the empty glass. To William Garner he said:

"Did I leave a stick in here?"

"You did," answered the druggist, and handed over a club which the stranger, in his haste, had left on the counter. "Some stick, that," William Garner commented.

"Ain't it?" replied Bush, gazing at the club proudly. "I spent an hour cutting it out of a hedge."

And the diminutive disciple of the Rooseveltian doctrine of the Big Stick swung jauntily out.

CHAPTER V.

Still half angry at having been deserted in the drug store by the dashing Harry Loveland, the young woman in the pink hat led her party across the street to the stationery store kept by Miss Matilda Farnum, whose income from the summer trade was said to exceed that of any other merchant in Wells Lake. Miss Farnum was on duty behind her newspaper counter. At first glance, she appeared to be an austere and hopeless old maid. When the pink hat and its company entered her shop, she made no effort to conceal a frown,

for the owner of the pink hat owed her a bill of three years' standing.

Miss Farnum looked on gloomily while the young women thumbed the toy dolls, the birch-bark calendars, the boxes of correspondence cards, and the dozens of other tasteful things displayed on her show tables. After a ten-minute stay, the delegation went out without making a purchase, and Miss Farnum drew a sigh of relief.

To the post office the young women went. The postmaster's son had trundled the mail sacks over from the station, the delivery window was closed, and through its glass pane the postmaster, his two daughters, and his paid assistant could be seen distributing the letters among the boxes, with a feverish haste to please the public that accounted for most of the mistakes the post office made.

In the street outside, the waiting motor cars chugged and rumbled, while the fumes of gasoline mingled in the evening air with the fragrance of honeysuckles wafted from the churchyard just up the way. Along the sidewalk were young men in flannels and sport shirts, young women in soft dresses, a trio of solemn-eyed schoolgirls in bloomers, guarded by the matron of a near-by girls' camp, and, most important of all, a stout and puffy gentleman in white ducks, who must have owned at least half of Chicago, judging from the high tone in which he condemned the postmaster general of the United States and all his works.

"This makes three nights hand running that I've been kept waiting for my mail till nine o'clock!" the stout and puffy gentleman complained. "It's a public outrage, and I won't stand it any longer! It never has happened before, and I've lived here at the lake fourteen summers."

He was speaking to Bill Glower, who would one day become the leading citizen of Wells Lake. Bill was a round-

faced and cheery native who built camps for the summer people, in addition to operating the best farm in the county and conducting the village coal, lumber, and trucking business. Bill Glower smiled good-humoredly at the city man's wrath.

"By the way, Mr. Jessup, down at the train just now I noticed a shipment of twelve or fifteen rocking-chairs consigned to you. Shall I haul 'em out to your place in the morning?"

"I wish you would," the city man answered. "I've been waiting a whole week for those chairs."

There were scores of villagers at the post office to augment the little crowd of summer people. Some of the young men of the town sat in a row on the doorstep of George Gessler's shoe store and whistled shrilly whenever a pair of white ducks or an awning skirt went past. Another group of young bloods lounged around a telephone pole and lifted their voices in barber-shop harmonies that were far from unpleasant to the ear. Small boys in sleeveless jerseys, brown-armed little Indians, played at some game of their own in and out among the automobiles.

But most conspicuous of all the people waiting for the mail window to open were the plump girl in the pink hat and her friends. Blocking the post-office doorway they stood, talking loudly, laughing boisterously, and remaining quite unconscious, of course, that the eyes of the crowd were directed toward them.

From the edge of the sidewalk two village girls watched the gay group in the doorway. Wondering was the gaze of the village pair; their eyes had the same quality of expression that may be seen in the eyes of cows upon whose pasture a stranger has trespassed. At a particularly noisy laugh from the doorway, the shorter of the village girls looked up at her companion. They both smiled, just a little, and there was

a good deal of womanly pity in their smile.

"Too bad," whispered the first.

"It's the Kenton crowd. What else can you expect?" replied the other.

Villagers and city people mingled freely in Wells Lake; even the magnificent Mr. Jessup who may have owned half of Chicago was not above exchanging friendly words with Bill Glower, nor did Bill Glower feel any hesitancy in speaking as man to man with Mr. Jessup. But the girls in the doorway spoke to no one, and no one spoke to them. Yet a disinterested observer might have noted that while the young women spoke to no one, they spoke at every one. A little brassily they laughed and chattered now, barring the doorway, oblivious to the desire of other people to enter the post office. Yet, as one of the village girls said:

"It's nothing against them, if they've never been taught any better."

Tom Dolan, the town policeman, stood beside the popcorn wagon. A voice hailed him from the telephone pole, where the male quartet had paused to rest between songs.

"Oh, you Tom! What was the racket a while ago?"

"Just a backfire, I guess," answered the policeman.

"Dan Vroom thought* maybe you were trying a shot at us, Tom," the vocalist laughed.

A light hand touched the policeman's sleeve. Turning, Dolan looked into the eyes under the pink hat. The face was pretty, Tom thought, though the mouth was a little hard. He grinned a big boy's grin.

"Hello, Bertha!"

"Tom, have you seen Harry?"

"Harry Loveland?"

"Yes, of course."

"I saw him come out of Garner's a few minutes ago. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. We've lost him—



It does a girl no good with Wells Lake people to ride a leaping aquaplane in the wake of a speed boat driven by a young millionaire.

that's all. You haven't seen Maisie, either, have you?"

"Not to-night."

The pink hat thought a moment.

"Well, if you see either of them, tell them we're waiting at the boat, will you?"

"Sure I will, Bert."

The pink hat returned to the post-office door. The delivery window had opened at last, and villagers and summer folk flocked into line to wait their turn.

"Oh, you Tom!" sang a teasing voice from the direction of the telephone pole, but Constable Tom Dolan was busy thinking.

He was thinking of a little girl of twelve, a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired, impetuous little girl whom he had snatched out of the path of a runaway team at that very corner in his first summer as guardian of the law in Wells Lake. It seemed only yesterday, but ten, twelve, thirteen years had passed since that day, and now the little girl wanted to know where Harry Loveland was. Not that Tom himself had any heart interest at stake, for he was happily married and the proud father of a family. But the little girl of thirteen years ago was Bertha Kenton no more, but Bertha

Benvil—Mrs. John Joseph Benvil. Tom Dolan was a plain, simple, honest-living American, and the ways of some of the society folk who frequented Wells Lake puzzled him.

The mail-hour gathering had begun to disperse. Motor engines buzzed and klaxons sounded, calling Tom to his duty as traffic cop. Suddenly, above the racket of the departing cars, a strident voice reached his ears:

"Look out, there! Stop, I tell you! Back up, for God's sake! There's a man under your wheels! Where's that policeman? Officer! Here!"

Swiftly through the street congestion Dolan made his way toward the sound of the voice and of other voices that had begun to shout.

"This way, officer!"

It was the city gentleman in white ducks. He stood on the running board of his car and waved an arm wildly.

"There's a man in the road here. I came near running over him. Look—down here!"

Under the headlights of the Jessup car, in the shadow between the front wheels, lay a man's body.

"Back up your car, sir," the policeman commanded.

"How can I when the fellow behind

me is right on top of me?" retorted Mr. Jessup, indignant always and angry now.

"Back up, you, sir!" Dolan shouted.

The car behind made room, and Jessup's car moved slowly to the rear until the road was clear. Face down it lay. Dolan, on his knees, turned it over until the headlights rested on the face.

"Harry Loveland!" he cried.

From the hip pocket of Loveland's gray-flannel trousers a flash lamp protruded. With the light from this, Dolan made a swift examination. Loveland's face wore a black smear of road oil, and his mouth was full of gravel. His silk shirt was stained reddish black, and the ground where the body lay was wet.

"Tear his shirt open."

But Dolan had forestalled the command. The young man's chest lay bare. A broad, well-muscled chest it was, with a great blotch above the heart.

"Maybe he isn't dead!" cried Jessup. "Here, lift him into the car!"

Into the car the onlookers raised the limp and heavy body.

"Jump in, officer!"

With roaring engines, the car rushed away up the hill to Doctor Galloway's big white house under its grove of moonlit maples.

"He's in," called Jessup, over his shoulder, as he saw the lights of the physician's runabout at the gate.

Within three minutes of the discovery of the murder, Harry Loveland's body lay on Doctor Galloway's operating table stripped to the waist. The doctor, after one searching look, turned to the rich man and the policeman who waited awe-stricken for his word. He need not have uttered the word, for they could read it in his eyes.

"Dead!" he said. "Shot through the heart."

The three men stared at one another in horror.

"Who'll tell his father?" asked Jes-

sup at last; his throat was dry and the words came hard. "I can't do it. I know him too well."

"Telling his father isn't so hard," said the doctor, "but who will tell his mother?"

"It's my job," said Tom Dolan. "Leave it to me."

Back down Main Street rushed the car toward the Loveland mansion at the opposite end of town. On the way it passed the post office, in front of which stood a crowd of people talking excitedly. The murmur of many voices reached Jessup and Dolan as they sped by. They passed; too, the lane leading down to the docks, where a speed boat lay moored under the moonlight.

In the cushioned chairs of the boat five young women sat waiting, wondering, yawning. In the seat at the stern was the black-haired girl; she had turned her back toward the others and rested her elbows on the after deck, and she gazed in silence across the rippling silver of the lake.

"Where on earth did you vanish to, Maise?" asked the pink hat impatiently.

But the black-haired girl made no answer.

CHAPTER VI.

No event could have stirred the community of Wells Lake more deeply than the murder of Luther Loveland's only son. Luther was the one rich man in the place, as wealth is counted by metropolitan standards. Indeed, he was one of the most opulent men in the Middle West.

In Wells Lake he had been born, and with Wells Lake he liked to be associated in his magnificent years. He had made his fortune in Chicago, where the figure of "Lord" Loveland had been a mighty one on the Board of Trade. He had a house on Riverside Drive and lived in it a month every year, for the looks of the thing. His Lake Shore home in Chicago was an estate in itself.

He owned a ranch in Texas and a mountain range in Utah. But Wells Lake was the place he liked best.

In Wells Lake he donned an old suit of clothes and an old slouch hat and walked Main Street as common as any other man. There it was "Hello, Lute!" and "How are ye, Joe?" There, at the chess table in the rear of Jess Vanderhoof's cigar shop, he was as welcome as any one who could qualify for membership in that select society of old codgers, and no more welcome than any other member.

The poor people of Wells Lake loved him for his bounty; a dozen worn-out families looked to him for their living and never looked in vain. In any public movement requiring funds, his name headed the subscription list. The drinking fountain, the concrete docks, the little park at the top of Main Street hill—these and countless other blessings enjoyed by the simple-hearted people of the town were gifts from him. A prodigal benefactor was Luther Loveland, yet there were people in Wells Lake who would not speak to him in public—or in private, for that matter.

One of these people was Miss Farnum, who kept the stationery store. Another was the Reverend Doctor Appleby, whose church Bush Parwin could view from the windows of the Grand Palace Hotel. A fierce little dominie was Doctor Appleby, and his motto was: "No Compromise with Satan!"

As if to make up for Doctor Appleby's hardness of countenance, the Reverend Augustus Reasoner, at the eastern end of town, greeted Luther Loveland warmly, if not effusively, on all occasions, and smoked many a choice cigar with him in the library of the Lovelands' summer palace on the hill. There was nothing of the "holier-than-thou" about Reverend Augustus Reasoner in his attitude toward Mr. Loveland, and the Reasoner church prospered accordingly. One year it was new

carpets and decorations throughout. Another year it was a pipe organ. A third year the salary of the Reverend Augustus was increased one thousand dollars by a gift from "a friend," this anonymous friend being generally understood to be Luther Loveland—for, as Doctor Appleby remarked, with a wink, to Miss Farnum:

"Who else in Wells Lake could afford to give away a thousand dollars and remain anonymous?"

There were others than Doctor Appleby and the stationery dealer who turned their faces lakeward when Luther Loveland went by. They said that Loveland bought up public opinion in Wells Lake for the sole purpose of providing a place for himself where he could live immune from the operation of those unwritten social laws that mete out ostracism to offenders. Like the hard-hearted Puritans they were, these few persons declined to be bought up, but they were a minority in Wells Lake.

The hopeless and comfortable majority basked in Loveland's munificence, gave him three cheers and the glad hand on demand, and contented themselves with the thought that most men, if the truth could be known, were no better than they ought to be.

"Why," they asked, "why single out for scorn the only rich man the town has produced in its three generations of history?"

So Luther Loveland moved among the good-natured people of Wells Lake like a king among his subjects, while ill-natured people like Doctor Appleby and Miss Farnum glowered from the outer darkness and were never invited to the lawn parties, the old settlers' picnics, and the many other royal festivities with which the king regaled his faithful.

As Luther was the all but monarch of the town, so his son Harry was the crown prince. The town had seen Harry grow from babyhood into the

tallest, handsomest, and liveliest of its young men. It had showered affection upon him; it had never forgotten that Harry was sole heir to the Loveland millions. When Harry had gone away to Ann Arbor rather than to Madison —his father feeling that the university of his own State was too thoroughly permeated with the spirit of radicalism —he had been followed by the good will of the whole community. When he had been dismissed in his sophomore year, Wells Lake had wondered what could be wrong with the University of Michigan.

Little had the Michigan authorities known what they were bringing down upon themselves when they had expelled Harry Loveland. Little had they guessed that the twin sons of Reverend Augustus Reasoner, who had been slated to enter that benighted institution of learning the following year, would be sent off to Harvard instead.

At Harvard, where Harry had preceded the Reasoner twins, the Loveland millions had seemed to cut as little ice with the faculty as they had at Ann Arbor, and Harry had given up his studies at the end of a tempestuous year. Then he had entered business with his father in Chicago.

"Never mind, sir. A thorough business experience is worth more than a college degree to any man," the Reverend Augustus Reasoner had said to Mr. Loveland, at the sudden termination of the young gentleman's university career; and the old gentleman had been so much comforted by the remark that he had presented the Reasoner church with a baptismal font.

CHAPTER VII.

Wells Lake had seen little of Harry Loveland in his business years, though the old gentleman had made the place his headquarters from May to October as always. Two summers had passed before Harry returned, and when he

had come back, he had brought with him a bride.

In the bride's honor, and out of natural interest, the town gave a public reception and dance on the schoolhouse grounds. Bill Glower and his gang of husky carpenters spent three days in putting up the dancing platform. The band came by special train all the way from Milwaukee, and the baggage coach ahead carried the ice cream. It was a new kind of ice cream for Wells Lake people, who were used to the common or back-porch sort that father makes on Sunday while the family is at church. The cream for this occasion was molded, every bit of it, into twin hearts, and if your portion had been unwrapped carefully from its paper, you would have seen the semblance of an arrow transfixing the hearts.

Thirteen times in two and one-half columns the Wells Lake *Pioneer* called the affair a gala one, and it ran the story of the party ahead of a telegraph item announcing that Austria had gone to war against Serbia.

Wells Lake liked the bride from the first, though it could not understand why a six-footer like Harry had picked her out. She was a little thing, was Mrs. Harry. As Paula Parwin, in New York two winters before, she had been the tiniest girl in the famous "Moonlight Pony Ballet." The dramatic critics had turned their microscopes upon Paula and found her perfect; the following year had seen her elevated to the star part in a company of her own, and her manager would doubtless have made her fortune and his, if Harry Loveland had not wrecked his plans.

Paula Loveland charmed Wells Lake as she had charmed Broadway. The Wells Lake ladies who called—and all of them did call—pronounced her the sensiblest little thing for her size and years they had ever seen.

"And to think that she was once an actress! It doesn't seem possible!"

Doctor Appleby had dropped in at Miss Farnum's little shop one afternoon to inquire for his favorite religious paper, when the family carriage of the Lovelands drove by. Only Mrs. Luther Loveland used the carriage nowadays. Luther had his flivver, which he refused to let the hired man clean, preferring it with as much mud upon it as possible. Harry, when he visited the place, drove a racing car that resembled a grade-crossing wreck when standing and a yellow streak when going. In the old family carriage, as it passed down Main Street that day, sat Mrs. Loveland, tall, frail, still beautiful in spite of the lines of sadness that marked her face. At her side sat little Mrs. Harry, looking as lovely to the eyes of the matter-of-fact business street as Cinderella looked to the prince or as Snow White to the dwarfs.

"Isn't she sweet?" cried Miss Farnum; then she flushed almost girlishly under Doctor Appleby's gaze, for Doctor Appleby, be it known, was a widower.

"Sweet?" repeated the minister. "Which one do you mean?"

"Both of them," replied Miss Farnum impulsively. "Both of them. How good it is that Mrs. Loveland can have such a daughter, after all these lonely years!"

"Amen!" fervently agreed the domine. "We have to believe that there are compensations in life for all our sorrows, don't we?"

Miss Farnum pondered his words when he had gone away. Doctor Appleby himself was lonely, but that his words might have had some application to herself she dismissed as an unworthy thought. No, he had only meant what she had meant—that Mrs. Luther Loveland, whom the whole village loved and pitied for all that she had borne in her domestic life, was at last to have a daughter to love and cherish, a creature of her own gentle kind to take the

place of the little girl whose grave upon the hilltop bloomed with fresh flowers every day in the year.

As viewed by the observant eyes of the village, that month was the happiest month the Lovelands had known in many years. Mrs. Harry, it seemed, was the influence needed to draw the family together. For her sake, the old gentleman became a model citizen. He hunted up his school-day friends, men on the downhill side of fifty now, many of them bent or broken by the stress of life; and he chartered Dal Henderson's big launch, the *Storm Queen*, and took them fishing. For days, these gray old argonauts roamed the lake and pursued the pickerel to his lair, until Stephen Douglas Sikes, Wells Lake's leading butcher and the first of her merchants to use a gasoline delivery truck, uttered cries of alarm and declared that another week of the *Storm Queen* would drive him into bankruptcy; for every day was fish day in town while the Loveland voyages lasted.

For Mrs. Harry's sake the old gentleman, when he was not cruising with his cronies or sitting in at the Vanderhoof chess game, stayed at home and led the life of a simple gentleman farmer; and the people who dwelt along the road that led over the hills to East Cove missed the familiar sight of his flivver, streaking toward the mysterious camp over there—a camp about which everybody knew, possibly excepting the Reverend Augustus Reasoner.

Mrs. Loveland was happy, too. With Mrs. Harry at her side, she came out of her seclusion, and the Loveland carriage stood before many gateways where it had not stood in years. Much tea was drunk in Wells Lake that summer, ostensibly in honor of Mrs. Harry, but actually in celebration of Mrs. Loveland's return to social life.

"Harry has settled down at last," her neighbors whispered, and every son's mother of them rejoiced with her.

For Harry was no longer the sullen, dark-browed lad who had come home disgraced from college. He carried his head high; he walked along Main Street with the assurance of a man of affairs. There were rumors of big deals that he had put through in Chicago, and the town, always eager to sing his praises, made much of him now.

He had settled down. He had sidestepped the traps that lie in the pathway of wealthy youth. He would become a greater man than his father, and perhaps a better man, with the dainty, dashing little Mrs. Harry to help him. Thus thought Wells Lake when he took his bride back to the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

A year passed, and Harry came to Wells Lake alone. Mrs. Harry was not well, it was explained by Lawyer Sanders, Luther Loveland's local man of affairs, and by others who were in a position to know, among them the Reverend Augustus Reasoner. A little child had come to Harry and his wife, a son to carry on the Loveland name and fortune. The young mother had gone to the seaside to be with her people while Harry loafed and played among the haunts of his boyhood. The Loveland clergyman was quite tearful in accounting for Mrs. Harry's absence and in expressing sympathy for the lonely young husband.

People of Miss Farnum's kind observed that Harry had changed in his year away. He was, if possible, taller, straighter, and handsomer than before, but his manner was distract, his eye was restless, and he spoke evasively to well-meaning folk who inquired after the health of his family.

When September came, he lingered while his father went back to business alone, nor did Wells Lake say good-by to Harry that year until October had stripped the trees and driven the last

of the summer people back to their winter homes.

The last, that is to say, except the Kentons.

Colonel Wexford Kenton had been considered wealthy when he had come from St. Louis to establish his summer residence at Wells Lake. But that had been in the nineties, and now his riches consisted principally of a household of three daughters—Bertha, now Mrs. John Joseph Benvil, who was twenty-five, plump, and frivolous; Maisie, the second child, who was dark-haired, slender, and thoughtful; and Hazel, nicknamed "the pig," who was eighteen and weighed almost as much as both her sisters put together.

A gay, dashing, high-spirited trio of girls the Kentons were, each one athletic, even poor Hazel, and each one charming in her own peculiar way. Fond of entertaining visitors from the outside world, they had set a swift and merry pace for the younger set at the lake, until Wexford Kenton's fortune had cracked under the strain.

Perhaps it was not the strain of the family's extravagance that shattered the Kenton fortune so much as a bad habit which the colonel himself had fallen into—the habit of looking upon the wine when it was red. People in the village whispered that he carried the wine with him in his hip pocket, so low had he fallen from grace.

Gloomy years descended upon Elk Island, the Kenton summer home. The big house stood unpainted until nothing but the kindly foliage of summertime saved it from being an eyesore. The engines in the motor boats went wrong and were not repaired. In the summer before Harry Loveland brought home his bride, it was rumored that Mrs. Kenton had been seen in the act of doing her own cooking.

The colonel did not come to the lake that summer. Possibly a mistrust of his lady wife's cooking had something

to do with his remaining in St. Louis through the hot weather, but the explanation generally accepted was that he had taken a job. According to the report that drifted up to Wisconsin, it was a job in a broker's office. But the Kentons managed to bear up under their father's absence, for John Joseph Benvil had appeared on the scene.

Benvil, a tall, spare, scholarly-looking gentleman approaching middle age, had made a life study of the steel-and-iron business, and now, for the first time in years, he was taking a vacation from his Chicago office. The Jessups, who entertained him at the lake, outdid themselves to show him a good time, for Jessup regarded Benvil as a coming man. At their home he met Bertha Kenton, the colonel's eldest child.

Up to that time the Kenton girls had been beauteous, so far as Wells Lake was concerned. Many a young man of village parentage had cast admiring eyes in their direction, but they had no eyes for village young men. As for the young men in their own social class, those who frequented the lake were too young to be regarded, while those who might have seemed worth while were finishing college and getting on the job in the cities, laying the foundations whereupon to support families in later years, as becomes proper young Americans. John Joseph Benvil was therefore a rare find, and Bertha Kenton, having seen him first, clung to him jealously.

Benvil's courting was swift and ardent. The studious man had come out of his workshop and beheld womanhood for the first time, and he was a boy in love. "He fairly worships the grass Bert walks on," Mrs. Jessup remarked to her husband, and sighed for the departed romance of her own girlhood, as all married folk sigh sometimes, no matter how comfortably married they may be.

Romance had its innings that summer

at the lake. Bert and Benvil were married in the fall, and everybody proclaimed it a splendid match. Benvil would make a good provider, and Bertha would know how to spend his money. Nothing could be better.

When summer came again, bringing Harry and his actress bride, it found the big house on Elk Island newly painted and the motor boats running again. It found Colonel Kenton entering the steel-and-iron business under his prospering son-in-law at a salary commensurate with the Kentons' former grandeur. Best of all, it found a cradle and a nursemaid on the Kenton veranda.

That summer was as happy for the Kentons as for the Lovelands, and it passed with but a single cloud in the sky, a cloud discernible only to Benvil. Perhaps it was not important that his wife had little affection for the son born to them; perhaps her love for the child would grow. Benvil was too happy to criticize her.

But the infant son of the house of Benvil did not want for tender care. Maisie Kenton, Bert's black-haired sister, held the child in her arms through more hours in the day than it is good for babies to be dandled; and the nursemaid employed by Mrs. Benvil that year enjoyed the easiest summer on record in the history of her hard-working profession. To little Jack Benvil, Maisie was aunt, nursemaid, and foster mother all in one.

So, too, in his second summer, the summer when Harry Loveland came home without his bride. It was Maisie always who took the boy to the beach to build him houses in the sand and to hold him while he paddled his chubby feet in the water. It was a pretty sight, Benvil thought, to see the dark-haired, graceful girl at play with the youngster, teaching him to take his first steps, trundling him along the wide veranda in the go-cart, fanning him to sleep in

the porch swing. But Benvil saw the sight only once that year; for the great war had quickened the pulse of business, and his office in the city demanded more time than he could have given if he had been twins. Neither that year nor the next did Wells Lake see much

of John Joseph.
But it knew that
Mrs. John Joseph
was not lonely.

upon its sinful first citizen, Luther Loveland.

At any rate, it does a girl no good with Wells Lake people to ride a leaping aquaplane in the wake of a speed boat driven by a young millionaire. It adds nothing to her fair name to be warned three times a week against driving her car at the rate of forty miles an hour through Main Street. Nor does she acquire merit in the eyes of the na-



"Who are you to talk of reputations?"

CHAPTER IX.

The village people, with the exception of a few impressionable young men, had never felt any great love for the Kentons, possibly because those young women were thought to hold their heads higher than necessity required; possibly because the community demanded more demureness of conduct than Bert Kenton displayed; possibly, too, because the town had to even up somewhere for the indulgence it bestowed

tives when, on a hot day in July, or in any other month, she responds to a young man's dare and jumps off the public dock in a silk sport suit that cost her husband one hundred dollars if it cost a cent.

Bert Benvil's behavior, now that she was a married woman and free from the trammels of spinsterhood, shocked Wells Lake exceedingly, but it made a favorable impression upon Harry Loveland, and the more he displayed his ad-

miration in full view of the village, the harder the village tongues wagged.

They wagged so hard, indeed, that some of the sound vibrations therefrom reached the ears of John Joseph Benvil, at his desk in Chicago, and brought him up to the lake in the middle of a week. He found Harry Loveland at Elk Island and was cool toward him.

"How's your wife, Harry?" asked Benvil curtly.

"Really I couldn't say," Harry returned.

"Why did you ask him about his wife?" said Mrs. Benvil to her husband afterward. "Didn't you know it would embarrass him? Haven't you heard that he has sued her for divorce?"

"Divorce—from that sweet little thing?"

"Yes; haven't you read about it? Why, John, it's been in the papers all summer. Listen—do you want to know something?" She put her pretty mouth close to her husband's ear and whispered, "Watch Harry and Maisie."

Benvil did watch Harry and Maisie, and from the brief observations that he was able to take in a two days' stay, was convinced that a desperate case of mutual admiration had begun between the tall, handsome, smooth-muscled Harry and his wife's dark-haired sister.

"If he had his divorce," Benvil told his wife, "I'd be the first to wish them happiness. But he's still a married man, confound it!"

"Well, he won't be much longer," said Bert. "They've been separated for two years, and there's nothing in the way now except some silly legal obstacle that Harry's father's money can fix."

Benvil went back to the city half hating Wells Lake and its wagging tongues and loving his pretty wife better than before. The lingual vibrations continuing to reach him, however, he returned to the lake for a second visit; and shortly after his departure, little Jack's hired nursemaid packed her

trunk and gave notice of intention to leave. In her pocketbook was a hundred-dollar bill that Benvil had paid her for creating the vacancy in the Elk Island household staff, but the nurse neglected to mention the bill to her mistress. She was tired, she said, and needed a vacation. This she proceeded to take in that well-known summer resort, Chicago, Illinois, where she stopped with her sister, the wife of a glum young man employed in the stockyards, regaling that lady with tales of the doings of society at Wells Lake.

"But I wouldn't spy on her, not for any money, and I told him so; and I'll bet if I'd have had my senses about me, he'd have come across with five hundred as easy as one. I don't envy women with them quiet husbands."

To which the wife of the stockyards man replied, with a martyr's sigh, that that was the kind of husband hers was.

Requiring a new nurse for the boy, Mrs. Benvil made inquiry among her acquaintances; and through the Jessups, who were still John Joseph's closest friends at the lake, she learned of a particularly desirable young person then in search of employment.

Miss Beebe, upon arriving at Elk Island for inspection, turned out to look like a young business woman, perhaps even a college graduate. In spite of Mrs. Benvil's objections to her general trimness and evident intelligence, she proved to be an adept at caring for children, and Mrs. Benvil had cause many times thereafter to boast of the new girl's promptness, obedience, and capability, taking to herself the credit, of course, as lazy women of the employer class do.

"She's the best servant I've ever had," Mrs. Benvil confided to Mrs. Jessup. "She does everything exactly as I want it done. I don't have to take the slightest responsibility."

"Aren't you a little harsh with her at times?" asked Mrs. Jessup.

"Perhaps I am," Bertha laughed, "but that's good psychology. If I didn't keep her under, she'd ask for more money."

A dutiful servitor was Miss Beebe, no more in attending the Benvil baby than in reporting her observations of the life and manners of Elk Island by weekly letter to Deering Brothers, Detectives, Incorporated, Halstead Street, Chicago. And the Deerings as dutifully passed her reports along to John Joseph Benvil, at his busy offices in the Loop.

CHAPTER X.

When the nature of Miss Beebe's reports had become such that Benvil could bear the strain no longer, he laid his information before Colonel Wexford Kenton and asked that bibulous gentleman's advice as a father-in-law and a friend. The colonel, like a true Missourian of the old school, first offered to fight Benvil with any weapons Benvil might name, then threatened to sue the Deering Brothers for defaming his daughter's character.

Later in the day, he recalled his favorite stanza from Omar Khayyam, wherein occur the words, "a jug of wine;" after which he went on a jamboree, told his troubles to every sympathetic bartender between La Salle Street and the Northwestern Station, and wound up on Benvil's shoulder in Evanston that night. With tears pouring down his cheeks, he counseled his son-in-law to turn the hussy out of doors.

Inasmuch as the lady in question was some hundreds of miles away in her father's home on Elk Island, Benvil disregarded the colonel's advice. But he went to the lake and took Bert for a boat ride along the shores where, three years before, they had done their courting. The golden loveliness of autumn lay on fields and woods. Flocks of waterfowl flew southward through the

late September sunshine. But Benvil's eyes were all for his young wife, weeping before him.

"I love you still, Bert," he told her, at the end of their talk, "and I believe—I want to believe—that you love me. I ought to break with you without another word. But maybe it's been my fault more than yours. I've been over my head in work ever since we were married. I ought to have known better."

Bert's thoughts were more vindictive than penitent.

"That cat of a nurse!" she moaned.

"We have to consider the boy," Benvil went on. "He's such a fine little chap, Bert. If anything happens—if we don't stay together—people will hold it against him all his life. Don't you see, dear? I can't put you away, and I won't. I've decided to give you another chance, for his sake. For one year from to-day, I'll put you on probation. You may stay with your folks; you may go where you please. I require only one thing from you. I'll give you a year to think it over; and while you are thinking, just remember that I love you with my whole heart. I've never loved any woman but you, Bert. You can't say as much of Loveland. He may have a million dollars for every thousand of mine, but you can keep my love through all eternity. You can't keep his."

After the boat ride, Benvil remained at Elk Island only long enough to hunt up little Jack and give him a fatherly hug. Miss Beebe had departed for new fields of investigation, and Maisie Kenton was acting as governess. The boy had become a lusty little toddler now and an expert in the use of a cooking spoon for excavation purposes. Benvil found them on the beach, digging caves in the sand and burying pine cones therein.

"Be good to him, won't you, sister?" he said at parting; and Maisie knew

from the man's tone that the thing she had feared and expected had occurred.

In town Benvil took time, before boarding the evening train, to pay a call at the mansion on the hill. Harry Loveland was superintending the clearing up of the garden plots, for Harry had retired from business in the city after three years of it and was now, in his old age, a gentleman farmer. His dahlias took blue ribbons at all the flower shows in the Midwest, thanks to the skill and labor of his Scotch gardener.

"Hello, John!" cried the gentleman farmer, a little too warmly, as Benvil came suddenly upon him. "How are you, old man?"

"Loveland," said Benvil, ignoring Harry's outstretched hand, "I suppose I ought to shoot you down for the hound that you are, and I would, if I were the only one to consider. But there are others to think about, and that's the reason I let you live."

The gentleman farmer turned red. Within him a dozen retorts struggled for utterance and ended by jamming his mind, so that he stood speechless, crest-fallen, discomfited.

"Keep away from Elk Island after this," said Benvil. "You've had your warning."

When the interview was over, Harry shook himself together, laughed at the departed Benvil, laughed at himself, laughed at things in general. Life was mostly a laughing matter to the crown prince of the Loveland realm.

CHAPTER XI.

Maisie Kenton pondered Benvil's parting words. When evening had come and she had seen her little nephew bathed and fed and tucked in bed, she sought her sister Bertha and found her engaged in burning letters in her bedroom fireplace.

Mrs. Benvil was clad in a kimono,

her yellow hair was untidy, and her eyelids showed traces of recent tears. Maisie stood beside the mantel and looked down upon her sister with a compassionate gaze which the sister did not see.

"You've been crying," said Maisie. "What's the matter?"

Bert tore a letter into small bits and dropped it into the flames.

"Can't you guess?" she replied.

"Why did John rush away this afternoon? Why didn't he stay?"

"Maise," said Bert, tearing up another letter viciously, "John knows everything!"

"I warned you, Bert. You wouldn't listen."

"It was that sneaking Beebe woman. Do you know what she was, Maise? She wasn't a nursemaid at all—she was a spy, and John put her here to watch me—the coward! And the Jessups helped him!"

As Bert watched the last of the letters burn, the firelight showed her face sullen and angry.

"What does he say he will do about it, Bert?"

"Do? He won't do anything about it. That's the worst."

The sisters were silent for a minute; then Maisie said:

"Do you mean he's given you a chance to go back to him?"

"That's what he calls it."

"It might be a lot worse, Bert. I know what I'd do if I were you. I'd get down on my knees and thank God for giving me such a husband. He's the best man in the world, Bert."

Mrs. Benvil laughed scornfully.

"When did you turn so sanctified?" she asked. "What do you know about prayer?"

"I wish I knew more about it, Bert. I wish you did, too, and I wish you had a little gratitude in your soul. For Heaven's sake, be honest with yourself for once in your life. You know

very well that mighty few women ever have such a chance—not one in a thousand."

Bert rose and flung herself upon the bed in a fit of angry sobbing.

"Oh, he's horrid! Horrid!" she wailed. "I wish I were dead!"

"That's right! Pity yourself!" said Maisie relentlessly. "Don't be sorry for John or little Jack or the rest of us. We don't count. Give us a black eye for all the world to laugh at, wreck John's happiness, saddle Jack with the reputation of having a bad mother, and then feel sorry for yourself!"

Bert sat up. Her eyes flashed irefully.

"Who are you," she cried, "to talk of reputations? What have you cared about the honor of the family? What have you done all summer but drag our name in the mud? I've tried to be a little decent, Maise—but you! Look at the way you've carried on with Harry at the club dances, flirting, spooning, lallygagging with him anywhere and everywhere till the whole State of Wisconsin is talking about it! And then you preach to me about the family's reputation!"

Maisie met the onslaught with a smile.

"Whatever I've done has been for your sake, Bert," she answered quietly. "If the State of Wisconsin has stopped talking about Harry and you and gone to talking about Harry and me, then I've accomplished what I set out to do. I've only my own good name to consider, Bert. You have your husband's and your boy's, even if you don't care about your own."

Bert stared at her with unbelieving eyes.

"Do you mean to say that you haven't been serious—that you aren't head over heels in love with Harry Loveland?"

"When I fall in love, Bert, it'll be with a cleaner man than Harry Loveland."

"Don't knock Harry, please," warned Mrs. Benvil. "Harry has been unfortunate; he has made a mistake. But there's no law under the sun that compels a man and a woman to go on with their mistakes all their lives. I've made my mistake, too—"

"And you're making the biggest mistake of your life right now," Maisie told her. "You've been a fool for years and got away with it because you're so darned pretty. But you can't keep it up forever, Bert. You'll have to pay sooner or later, and if you had one-tenth as much sense as you have good looks, you'd know that what I say is the truth."

Bertha studied her sister's face craftily.

"So you aren't crazy over Harry?"

"No, my dear. My sanity in that direction is perfectly intact, thank you."

Derision from sister Bertha.

"Believe what you please," said Maisie. "I've done all I could to save you. I've drawn the village talk away from you, and I'll still go the limit if you'll do your part and behave as John's wife and Jack's mother ought to behave."

"Aren't you kind?" Bert sneered. "And while I'm on my good behavior, leading a nice, namby-pamby, Sunday-school life, you'll become the second Mrs. Loveland, with millions behind you and the swellest car in Chicago to ride in when you take baskets of fruit to your poor, virtuous, ten-thousand-dollar-a-year sister! Your unselfishness is positively sublime!"

"Bert, you're a fool!" said Maisie, and left the impenitent to her conscience.

CHAPTER XII.

When winter approached, Mrs. Benvil, Maisie, Hazel Kenton, and the boy migrated to southern California. On the long railway journey across the desert, little Jack Benvil took cold. It was

an attack of the grip, said the hotel physician in Pasadena.

In Maisie's arms the patient moaned through a day and a night, a very sick little boy, barely conscious of the tender touch of Maisie's cheek or the song she crooned to lull him to sleep. Through the long night his chubby hand wandered to the side of his head, as if to let her know where his pain was. By morning he lay wilted and quiet in her arms, scarcely breathing; and in the last hour of darkness an egg-shaped swelling rose behind his left ear.

"Mastoiditis," said the doctor, at the first glance. "Call a car and get him to the hospital as quickly as you can. Every second counts. I'll phone Bellamy, and we'll meet you there in fifteen minutes."

"Dear, dear!" wailed Mrs. Benvil. "Isn't this awful!" And the distracted mother went to bed while Maisie and Hazel took the baby to the hospital.

It was a case, the operating surgeon explained to Maisie, in which the poison from the infection in the mastoid process had been absorbed by the system and had lowered the child's vitality to the danger point. The little patient might not rally from the anaesthetic.

Outside the door of the operating room Maisie waited—the doctors would not admit her—and listened to the sounds within—the clink of steel on glass, the quick movement of the nurses in response to the terse commands of the surgeons, and through it all the inarticulate moaning of the child. If Bert had been there to hear that plaintive, helpless little cry!

On the evening of the fourth day, Benvil, summoned from Chicago, stood at Maisie's side, looking down at his son on the hospital cot. The little head was swathed in gauze; the little hands, chubby no longer, picked ceaselessly at the coverlet.

"Where's Bert? Why isn't she here?"

Tears filled Maisie's eyes, and she turned away without answering. But Benvil drew her gently around to face him, understanding without words from her.

"Maisie, sister, you're a brick," he said.

Bertha ascended the hotel steps that evening, her face rosy from the air. Behind her, carrying her automobile cloak over his arm, strode Harry Loveland. They did not see the man awaiting them until he rose from his piazza chair and stepped into their path.

"Why, John!" the woman exclaimed. "What are you doing in California?"

"Why are you out motoring when Jack is in the hospital?"

"Now, John, don't be silly and make a scene," she pouted. "I called at the hospital this morning, and they told me Jack was getting along nicely. There was nothing I could do—I'd only have been in the way, so Mr. Loveland and his father took me riding. I needed the air, John, after all I've been through—and Maisie is there."

"Thank the Lord for Maisie!" said Benvil bitterly.

"Well, well, if here isn't John Benvil!"

It was Luther Loveland, loud-voiced and jolly-hearted as ever. Warmly he shook his summer neighbor's hand. "Too bad about your boy," he said. "That's what brings you down here, I suppose. Kind of a surprise to Mrs. B. to catch her out riding with two gay young bloods like us, hey?"

He laughed the uproarious laugh that Wells Lake knew and liked so well.

"Come have supper with us, won't you? That Altadena mountain air makes me as hungry as a wolf after a blizzard. Come along."

But Benvil excused himself and strode away through the town toward the hospital where Maisie kept watch.

They sat together on a little balcony outside Jack's room. Below them the

rays of the street lamps shone upon banks of giant geraniums in full bloom, though the month was December. For many minutes the pair had spoken no word. At last Benvil rose to go.

"You'll stay here all night with him?"

"Yes."

"You think he is out of danger now?"

"Doctor Bellamy told me so this morning. The nurses say he's delighted with the way the case is going."

"I'll be at the Maryland if you need me. Good night, sister."

Maisie saw him descend the steps and followed him with her eyes until the drooping branches of a pepper tree hid him from her sight. Then she tiptoed into the room, where a night lamp burned low on a table, and, bending over the white cot in the corner, she kissed little Jack Benvil very softly on the lips.

CHAPTER XIII.

At noon on the day after the murder of Harry Loveland, a stout, trimly dressed, brisk-mannered man descended from the train at Wells Lake and breasted his way through the little crowd that had gathered at the station.

"Auto, sir? Take you anywhere."

"This way to the ho-tel!"

"Carriage, mister?"

With the poise of a man used to crowds and confusion, he ran his eye along the line of conveyances at the station platform, stepped up to a light touring car, tossed his grip inside, followed the grip himself, and said to the young man at the wheel:

"Mr. Loveland's house."

The young driver turned around in his seat and stared with honest curiosity at the stranger.

"Mr. Loveland's, I said."

"Yes, sir," the young man responded.

Fixing his attention upon the business in hand, he sent the car whirring around the corner into Main Street and up the hill. Into the Loveland drive-

way he turned and, skirting a lawn gorgeous with summer flowers, drew up at the door of the town's finest home.

Having left his passenger on the steps, he continued around the lawn to the exit gate and swung downhill to the post office. There he halted abreast of a knot of sober-faced people who were gaping at a spot on the gravel pavement.

"Hi, Tom!"

Dolan, the town policeman, looked up from his place in the crowd and stepped to the side of the car. The young man at the wheel leaned over the door and said:

"I took Dan Deering up to Lovelands' just now."

"Dan Deering?"

"Yep; the only Dan. He came in on the twelve-ten."

"How do you know it was Dan?"

"I've seen his picture in the papers too many times to be fooled on him, Tom."

"All right, kid. Thanks."

"Kid" Dolan drove away to spread the news of the arrival of metropolitan detective talent, while Tom, his brother, went back to his occupation of facing an uncomplimentary public.

This day was the unhappiest in Tom Dolan's service as town policeman. Upon his shoulders for thirteen years had rested the responsibility of preserving law and order in the community. Wells Lake, isolated among the Wisconsin woods in the heart of a humble and peaceable region, had long boasted of its freedom from disturbing and disgraceful happenings, and one of its pet jokes was the big, wholesome-looking, gentle-natured Tom Dolan.

People liked Tom personally—every man, woman, and child in town was his friend—but everybody said that a policeman in Wells Lake was as useless and out of place as a U-boat in paradise. So the townspeople smiled when he sauntered along the street in his blue

uniform, and the summer people smiled, too, at seeing a bluecoat in a village so truly rural. Tom may have smiled at himself, but he had a family to support, and the town commission considered his services worth paying for, so he continued to wear the uniform. About once a year he stopped a runaway team, about as often assisted at a fire, and occasionally he rounded up cases of drunkenness that came into town from Lambert Junction, the nearest liquor station.

But always Tom held the confident expectation that something big would break some day—some opportunity to do the community a good turn that would be worth all the salary he had drawn in thirteen years. Now the big thing had broken, the opportunity had arrived and passed almost under his nose, and he had failed in his duty.

A murder had been committed in the middle of town, within a few yards of the spot where the whole town knew he had been on guard, and he had not discovered even the fact of the murder until the assassin had had a half hour in which to escape. Tom knew that the people who flocked to the post office to look at the dark stain in the street were talking as much about him as about the crime. But he offered no explanations or excuses. When questioned, he gave brief answers as to fact, and no more.

Jabez Underhill, president of the Wells Lake National Bank and chairman of the town commission, said to him bluntly:

"Tom, how the devil did it happen that you paid no attention when the shot was fired? Everybody in town heard it, and you were here

on this side of the street within a hundred yards. Everybody saw you. I saw you myself."

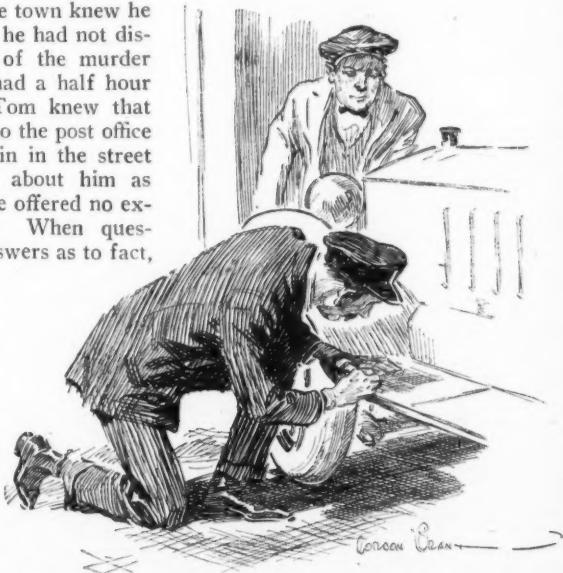
"Did you hear the shot, Mr. Underhill?"

"Of course I heard it, but I thought it was a car backfiring."

"That's what I thought, too."

"But you should have investigated, man, no matter what you thought." The president of the bank strode away, shaking his head, only to swing round and add: "The commissioners hold a special meeting to-night. You'd better be there."

To add to Tom's misery, his brother, who drove cars for Meredith Jones, the liveryman, brought him the news that Dan Deering had come to town. Tom knew what that meant. It meant that the Loveland millions would be placed behind the most aggressive private-detective agency in the United States in



Tom bent down to look. There were spots on the running board, a cluster of them.

an effort to run down Harry Loveland's murderer. That the effort was almost certain to be successful Tom did not need to be told. The Deerings had never failed in any case of which the public had been informed. The name of Deering had come to mean more to the common mind than fate. The Deering exploits were celebrated from coast to coast; the Deering fame cast a shade over local police authorities; the Deerings got almost as much publicity as the German secret service itself.

"They'll get Harry Loveland's murderer as sure as shooting," thought Tom Dolan. "Well, if I can help 'em, I sure will."

A man hailed him from the opposite side of the street. It was Stephen Douglas Sikes, in his butcher's apron.

"Oh, there, Dolan! Telephone message. You're wanted up at Loveland's."

"Right!" answered the policeman, and hastened up the hill to the house of mourning. He entered the hall through a screen door which a maid held open for him.

Beyond the filmy portières in the reception-room archway two women were standing. One was Mrs. Loveland, Harry's mother; the other Miss Farnum, the stationer. The head of the millionaire's wife was bowed on the shoulder of the shopkeeping spinster. In close-clinging arms, Miss Farnum held the stricken woman and pressed kiss after kiss upon her gray hair. They had been girlhood friends, these two.

CHAPTER XIV.

Luther Loveland sat in a big wicker chair at the library table. At first glance, Dolan could scarcely recognize him as the jovial, hearty good fellow whom he had seen in shirt sleeves and old slouch hat, swapping funny stories with Bill Glower and Lawyer Sanders on the steps of the bank the day before. To-day Loveland seemed suddenly shrunken and grown old. His stout,

hard cheeks had lost their firmness, his lower lip curled downward and outward, his jaw twitched, and the muscles below his temples contracted and relaxed spasmodically. His look was the look of a man who has been struck down by an unseen blow.

At the end of the table at his right sat a stranger—Deering, no doubt—and opposite him was Sheriff Heddinger, from the county seat twelve miles away. Lawyer Sanders, a crowlike person, stood at Loveland's elbow.

"Dolan, this is Mr. Deering, of Chicago. I've hired him to find the — that killed my boy."

A free speaker Luther Loveland had been all his days, and his frequent violence of language had always seemed only proper to his rough and picturesque character. But his profanity to-day sounded feeble, grotesque, out of keeping with the haunted, nerve-shattered look on his face.

Deering took up the millionaire's thought.

"There are some questions I'd have you answer," he said.

He was a stout little man and he sat up straight in his chair. The keen eyes that he turned toward Dolan saw everything and told nothing. Those eyes made people think of diamond drills.

"I'll be glad to tell everything I know and help every way I can," said Dolan.

"Thanks." Deering's voice conveyed no vast amount of gratitude. "At the time the shot was fired, you were patrolling the street in front of the post office, they tell me."

"Yes, sir."

"You heard the shot?"

"I suppose I did."

"But like every one else, you took it for a backfire?"

"Yes."

"The body lay under Mr. Jessup's car?"

"Under the front of it."

"Notice any strange cars in town?"

"No."

"The people in the cars were the usual people who came for the night mail?"

"As far as I know, sir."

"Do you recollect whose car it was that stood next in line in front of Jesus' car?"

"It was Mr. Hamlin's car, I think."

Here Mr. Loveland interposed:

"Hamlin's the Milwaukee coal man. No use wasting your time on him, Deering."

But the head of the most famous detective agency in America received the magnate's suggestion as indifferently as if it had come from the policeman. Inconsiderate as a buzz saw was Daniel Deering.

"Tell me whose cars were lined up in the street, as well as you can remember."

Tom Dolan succeeded in naming the owners of most of the cars that had stood within a few yards of the scene of the murder.

"That's all, now."

Dolan turned to the door.

"Just a minute, Tom," called Loveland, in a quavering voice. "Have you any ideas of your own about this thing?"

"I supply my own ideas," snapped Deering. "Other people's ideas only confuse. I don't want to be bothered with them. I'll send for you if I want you again, Dolan. By the way, did you see Harry Loveland last night?"

"Yes, sir; twice. The first time was about eight o'clock, when he came up from the docks with the Kenton girls and their company; the second was when he came out of Garner's drug store alone a couple of minutes later."

"The last time you saw him was about how long before the shot?"

"Fifteen minutes, perhaps."

"Did you hear any one inquiring for him?"

"Yes. One of the Kenton girls asked

me if I'd seen him. This was after the shot."

"One of the Kenton girls? Which one?"

"Bertha—Mrs. Benvil."

"Did she seem agitated or alarmed in any way?"

"No, sir. I supposed she had simply missed him—"

But Deering had turned to Harry's father.

"Who are these Kentons?" he asked.

"I'll tell you in a minute," replied Mr. Loveland. Rising, he followed the policeman into the hall.

"Tom, old man," he said, resting his hand on the blue-clad shoulder, "I want to thank you for what you did last night. It would have killed my—my wife if you hadn't broke the news to her the way you did. Maybe I ain't much of a gentleman myself, Tom—God knows I ain't—but I know one when I see one."

Averting his face to hide its uncontrollable twitching, he shook the policeman's hand and returned to the library in time to hear Sheriff Heddinger say:

"Sure he's on the square. Everybody in the county knows Tom Dolan. His grandfather broke the first sod in this part of the State. Clean-living, thrifty people, all the Dolans."

The sheriff was on his feet, preparing to leave.

"Lute," he said, "I'll do everything I can—you know that. I'll notify every police office in the country. I'll come down here and work on the case, and I'll bring all my deputies."

Silently he wrung the old man's hand and departed.

CHAPTER XV.

"Not much hope from either of those," said Deering, jerking his head toward the door. "Now, sir, let's get down to business."

He paused to shoot a look at Lawyer Sanders.

"I don't know that we need you just now," he said.

"Oh, very well, then," responded the crowlike attorney, and withdrew with dignity, thus allowing the detective and the millionaire to continue the conference in private.

"In a case like this, where the murderer leaves no more track than a bird in the air," said Deering, "we have to work backward from possibilities. We start at the rim of the circle and feel our way toward the center. Murders like this one aren't accidental; they're the natural culminations of trains of events preceding them. This murder is the effect of a cause, and I'll have to depend on you to help me find the cause. You know your son's life fairly well?"

"Yes."

"Have you any reason for suspecting that some one may have wanted to kill him?"

Luther Loveland's hand trembled as he drew from his pocket three cards and laid them on the table before the detective.

"I found these in his desk last night."

They were correspondence cards with gilded edges. Each card bore handwriting of the vertical style that professional librarians use. In the order in which Deering examined them they read:

"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man."

"But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it."

"Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy."

The detective looked up from the last of the cards.

"When did these come?"

"No telling."

"You found them in his desk this way, without envelopes?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever show them to you?"

"No."

"We don't know, then, how they reached him or how old they are?"

Loveland shook his head.

"I don't think they are important," he said, with the voice of a weary old man. "People in our position are hounded all the time by busybodies and religious cranks. I reckon I've had cards like those myself, but I chuck 'em in the wastebasket and forget 'em."

"Evidently your son thought otherwise about them, if he saved them. Do you know why anybody should have sent them to him?"

Loveland had turned his wicker chair so that he could look out through the open windows. On the lawn the spray from a fountain sparkled in the sunlight. Beyond the lawn were the flower gardens where Harry—

"Causes, Mr. Loveland," the detective was saying. "We must get down to causes, sir. Why should any one have sent these cards to your son?"

The millionaire's eyes rested stealthily, fearfully, upon Deering's face for a moment, then wandered back to the windows.

"What else did you find in your son's desk?"

"Nothing that signified much—nothing except some letters."

"Love letters?"

"I suppose you'd call 'em that."

"Where are they now?"

"I burned them."

"Mr. Loveland," said Deering, "I want to spare your feelings as much as I can. But you must understand at the start that I won't undertake the case unless I can have your full confidence. Why did you burn the letters?"

Luther Loveland's face twitched and quivered; the haunted look shone from his eyes.

"Mr. Loveland!"

The magnate could evade the diamond drills no longer; he raised his

gaze to the detective's face and let it rest there.

"Your son, your only son, has been murdered. The heir to your fortune has been shot down in the street as if he had been a dog. Do you intend to condone the crime? Not if you're a man, sir—and I think you are."

The millionaire's eyes clung to the detective's eyes as if drawing courage from them. Then, with a thump of his fist on the table, Luther Loveland came back to himself, and it was "Lord" Loveland of the Chicago wheat pit who shouted at Deering now:

"By God, sir, I'll tell you all I know! I don't give a damn what it costs! I lied to you, Deering; I lied like a coward! I didn't burn those letters!"

"That's better! That's the way to talk!" cried Deering.

CHAPTER XVI.

Under the shade of a maple in front of the Loveland mansion stood a light touring car. Tom Dolan would have passed by without recognizing his brother at the wheel, for Luther Loveland's parting words were still in his ears and pity for the millionaire was in his heart. But Kid Dolan's bobwhite whistle stopped him.

"What are you hanging around here for?" asked Tom.

"Waiting for you. Hop in."

"What's the idea?"

"Something that'll cheer you up."

Thereupon the younger brother became mysterious and spoke no more until he had stopped his car in front of Meredith Jones' livery establishment.

In the rear was a big white barn where Mr. Jones had once kept horses for hire, but the only horse on the premises now was the gold horse on the weathervane. A gasoline pump occupied the space where once the watering trough had stood. The harness room of bygone years was a salesroom for

tires and chains and motor sundries. The stable doors had been widened and the stall partitions removed to make room for a company of flivvers, motor cycles, and trucks, with here and there a car of more elegant pattern, the property of a summer resident.

Such a car stood outside the barn on a wooden platform, and before it young Dolan halted.

"This came in to be washed," said he, "but I want you to see it first. Look there."

He pointed to the running board on the left-hand side, where it curved upward to meet the front mud guard. Tom bent down to look. There were spots on the board, a cluster of them, brown black in color.

"Whose car is it?"

"Hamlin's. I saw it at the post office last night."

"Fetch me a bit of paper," said Tom.

With his knife he scratched at one of the spots and wiped the scrapings off on the paper that his brother held for him. Then he folded the paper carefully and put it away in his pocket.

This was the car that had stood in front of the Jessup car, under which Harry Loveland's body had been found. Tom looked at it inquiringly, as if expecting it to tell him what he wished to know. He examined the outside of the car all the way round. He entered the tonneau, closed the door, and tried to imagine how a murderer might lie in hiding on the floor of the car and fire at his victim over the door.

He was no detective, was Tom Dolan. His most serious cases had involved nothing more puzzling than the tracing of stolen pullets. But some fleeting instinct warned him that the car had a story to tell him, if he could only understand car language. Dan Deering, now, would be able to read the car's message at a glance; to Deering's eyes a car, a crook, or a concrete wall became as transparent as glass. Tom felt

that he ought to notify the city detective at once concerning strange spots on the running board. But then Deering didn't want other people's ideas. They bothered him. Moreover, Tom was human.

There was nothing in the tonneau that might not be found in a thousand tonneaus, and still Dolan's hunch remained strong within him and still his eyes searched. On an impulse, he lifted up the seat cushion and peered at the dusty collection of articles in the cavity underneath. There was a towing line, a set of side curtains, a wrench, a thermos bottle. Then his eyes lighted upon a little ball of white under the side cushion.

"What have you struck?" asked his brother.

"Woman's handkerchief," said Tom, "Any initials?"

Tom examined the bit of lace and linen.

"Here's two letters, an M and an H."

"That'll belong to one of the Hamlin girls," said the Kid. "No clew there."

Clew or not, Tom put the handkerchief into the same pocket that held the bit of folded paper.

At home with his sorrowing family that night, after the town commissioners had discharged him from his job as the police force of Wells Lake, he took out the handkerchief and studied the embroidered corner again.

"Is that an H?" he asked his wife.

She dried her tears and held the initial up to the lamp.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Dolan. "It's a K."

"M. K.—Maisie Kenton," Tom thought, and upon his truly rural and unsophisticated mind a picture began to dawn, a vague and shadowy picture of what had happened at the post office the night before. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of Mrs. Dolan, weep-

ing softly over her stocking basket. He saw a street half filled with cars. Most of the cars were empty. He saw Harry Loveland and his train of girls as they entered Doc Garner's; and he remembered—yes, he was sure of it—that the dark-haired Maisie Kenton had hung back and turned her steps toward the post office. He saw young Loveland swing out and stride away in the same direction, breaking open a pack of cigarettes as he went. In memory he heard the shot, the shrieks of the startled girls, the laughter of the village boys, the excitement over Miss Wickmire's hysterics. He heard Mrs. Benvil inquiring for Harry and Maisie.

The testimony of the Kentons at the coroner's inquest that afternoon was fresh in his mind. Mrs. Benvil had said:

"We came to town after supper in Harry's—Mr. Loveland's—motor boat. There were seven of us in the party. We went to Garner's for cream, all but Maisie. She'd stopped at the post office to mail some letters, and Harry went back to find her. That was the last we saw of him."

Then Maisie had testified: "I didn't want any cream. I stopped at the post office a while, but the mail was late, so I went to the boat and sat there until the girls came back. We waited for Harry till half past nine. Then we heard some one on the dock talking about the murder. No, I didn't see Harry after I left him at the post office."

Somewhere in Maisie's testimony a weak spot lurked, Tom was certain. He racked his brain to fill the gap in the picture, the missing circumstance that his imagination failed to supply.

He was still trying next morning when, attired in citizen's clothes, he strolled out through the woods to Gray Bowlders Camp on the lake shore.

TWO LETTERS

By Lucy Stone Terrill

TWO men from the same "home town" were brought into the same hospital one hot July day. And in a pocket of each man was a soiled and crumpled letter from his wife. They buried *this* letter with the man who died:

"DEAREST: At last I have had a letter from you—if you call that stingy little note a letter. I can't understand why you don't hear from me, for I answer every letter I get and am awfully careful not to say anything to displease those brutes of censors. *Couldn't* you write oftener?

"Junior plays soldier from morning until night. He is getting to be positively ferocious. It's too funny. He almost drives me frantic asking where I think you are and what I think you are doing and eating, et cetera. He woke me up last night, crying, and said he forgot to put, 'God watch over my daddy,' in his prayer. He has been miserable over it ever since. Isn't he a queer little soul? He loves to work in the garden, and digs up all the poor little vegetables that *do* finally make an appearance. I'll be glad if the time ever comes when people don't consider you a traitor if you haven't a nasty little garden somewhere about.

"Mrs. Delano finally died. The funeral was very rushed because the captain only had one day's leave. So many people thought he acted *queer*. I hope the shells won't affect *you* in any way. Do be awfully careful. You are always so reckless. When will you have your next leave? I am so lonely that I almost die.

"Oh, yes, Leta Evans' husband is back—all crippled to pieces, they tell me. I haven't been over yet, for I can't bear to see him. Poor Leta, I don't know how on earth she is going to take care of him, and there isn't a thing left for him to live for. I know it *would kill* me to have you come home that way—simply kill me. Oh, dearest, my heart is breaking for you!

"I hope you will like these little pictures of Junior and me. I had them taken just for you. Did you ever see anything so thin as I am? It's because I don't sleep, I suppose.

"Edith has just come to have me go and sew at the Red Cross, so good-by, darling. We are *so* miserable without you! These little dirty places are Junior's kisses. Do hurry and come home safe and sound to us. Our love, dearest, every minute, and write often.

"Your devoted

SALLY."

The nurses kept the other letter under the pillow of the man who lived, where they could read it to him whenever they had a spare minute.

"Good morning, my blessed old husband. It's been weeks since I heard from you, but I keep popping letters into the mail box just the same, hoping a few of them may reach you. How we wonder about you—and *how* we pray! And also how we hope you have nice, clean underwear!

"Don't you worry about us at all. We're fine. I *know* you are coming home to us. Bless your dear old happy heart!"

"Jim Evans got home last night. I went right over to see him. Poor old Jim, he's pretty much used up. It's a wonderful thing to have made the grand sacrifices he has, and never complain. Leta was a little shocked at first, but she'll be able to do 'most anything; she's so well and strong. She hadn't been told how badly he was wounded.

"Now, David, I want to tell you something that you are never to forget, no matter *what* happens. Jim said he begged them to let him die rather than send him home crippled so terribly. Oh, David, I am *so* afraid *you* might feel that way! If you will only remember, every instant, that you couldn't be so crippled or disfigured but what your coming back would mean my whole happiness. As long as your heart beats in your body, the children and I *want you*. If something terrible should happen to *me*, you would still love me, wouldn't you? More, perhaps, than before. So make up your mind that if there's only the least little bit left of you, you must be brave and come back to us.

"And then you *must* come back to see the garden—*beautiful* beets and real onions, growing just as thick as if they were one cent, instead of twenty, apiece. Ask your general if he knows how to make tomatoes grow. I don't."

"Well, good night, dear. God bless and keep you. MARY."

And of the man who died, the doctors said:

"Would you believe a man with *his* nerve could give up like that? Why, the fellow acted as though he *wanted* to die! Queer thing!"

But of the other man, they marveled:

"God Himself must have pulled that chap through. He's as unconcerned as if he'd only lost a finger. Queer thing!"

The Arch Fear

By Elizabeth Irons Folsom

Author of "A Corner of His Heart," "The Shadow at the Door," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

The touching story of a woman's devotion in the face of a haunting fear.

AMES SARGENT walked slowly up the avenue toward home.

There were two matters troubling him; both were connected with Anne, as, indeed, most matters had been since he had married her two years before.

One of the prodding, troublesome things was the sudden disappearance of her gayety, which had struck like glints through his sober days. The other was that the night before, coming unexpectedly upon Anne and John Norton, he had heard Norton say to her, "Hush!" It was not the word—it was the way he said it. There was no touch of lightness, as if it might have followed and been a part of some casual discussion. It had come sternly; more than that, it had come warningly. Now what did it mean when a man had a right to say, "Hush!" to Anne in a way that denoted understanding and that denoted also the exclusion of her husband?

He thought about it with irritation. He had not wanted to marry Anne. He had not wanted to marry any one. His wide, comfortable library, the broad table where he wrote, the joy of creation, the way in which publishers and even the public had realized that joy, had been enough for him. The chatter of women, their needs and diversions, he had studied merely as material and material really little needed, for it had been his theory that women were out of place in the stern stuff from

which he created his books. It rejoiced him that reviewers repeatedly mentioned the fact that the elimination of the woman element had left untouched the strength which had made him marked in the literary world.

He had not at first perceived in Anne anything unusual. She had brought to his work intelligence, swift fingers, and a voice modulated to attune with what she read to him. It had been his custom, when his hours of creative work were over—for he held himself to rigorous hours—to lie in his chair by the fire and have her read to him something in harmony with what he was then creating. She had a delicious pronunciation; there was a caress in the way she spoke words that pleased her. He had noted early that this tender cadence came to words that he, too, loved.

He had looked at her one day; he had spoken to her of matters other than the work; he had encouraged her to talk—a new type, surely an interesting type; he had smiled once at a whimsy of speech; and then suddenly, unforeseen, an impossible thing had caught him, had swept over him. He had told her. He had married her, so swiftly that it also had been one of the impossibilities.

His marriage had not interfered with his work. Only his rigid way was punctuated with her youth. He had early seen that he was being educated in a startling fashion—to look up from his

pages and smile at some foreign sparkle which she interpolated, and then to proceed along his line of thought not disturbed, but rather refreshed, by the interruption. This to a writer to whom a footfall had been a catastrophe, the sound of a voice a crucifixion!

Outside of their working hours, he learned to laugh. It pleased him that she liked their long walks together through the park in the winter dusks, that she could swing along beside him; that she liked the same plays, the brief occasional journeys which he allowed himself. She satisfied his artistic nature, for she was good to look at. He loved to watch the irregular sweep of dark hair shining over the tips of her ears. But most of all he gloated over her in the reading hour, because of her voice with the silver tone.

Of late he had missed something. The work had proceeded more along the old, uninterrupted way. More than once he had come in to find her sitting idly with folded hands. And her love of action, of light, of warmth, her boundless, swift eagerness, had seemed a vital part of her. Twice—no, three times—she had cut short the reading hour and gone away suddenly. These things had instantly touched him and had been classified as he classified everything. He had placed them as feminine phases. Then had come the "Hush!" of last night, and it had seemed to line up beside the other things.

Ames Sargent quickened his step, then slackened it and chose the longer of the two ways across the park. The lights were coming out in the shops, in the houses, and on the speeding motors. The swift twilight of November was dropping. Anne would have the lights on, the books ready; the fire would glow, and there would be a full, fine hour before dinner.

The "Hush!" included John Norton. He had known Norton since the latter's

first days out of the medical college from which he had come eager, determined, with infinite faith in himself. Norton had told Sargent of his ambition to specialize, and that he was already known and established was due in some degree to the older man. Norton had not seen Anne until after her marriage. There had been no apparent special friendship between them, although he was a frequent guest. Sargent turned shortly off the walk and took a cut home.

Anne came forward to meet him, as he had known she would. She put up her face to be kissed, and he had a glow of warmth for her; she was so pretty, there was such a fine line in the sweep of her white gown from throat to slim ankles.

The fire glowed, the lamp, too, and the books were placed as usual. The sense of well-being enveloped him.

Anne held him on the hearthrug. She looked at him with her head thrown back, her forehead a little crinkled.

"I am—I really am useful to you?" she asked. "Tell me. I am useful, am I not?"

"I couldn't do without you," he said lightly, smiling down at her.

"Well, I'm still useful, am I not? You don't think that I am—am less so?"

"You're not 'useful' just now," he answered, touching her chin with one finger, "because you're holding me here, instead of sitting me down and letting me half doze. Where were we last night in the book? Really, Anne, you're so charming I sometimes forget just where we are with the reading. But you will know. You always know, you small sage. Let's get at it."

She still held him.

"I wish," she began, color creeping up from her throat, "I wish you would like to be with me even if I should not be useful. I don't know how much it is my—myself that you like and how



Suddenly he opened his eyes and frowned. "What was that? I didn't catch that," he said sharply.

much it is just that I make you comfortable. I wish—Ames—that sometimes I knew what it is about me that you—love." She said the word hesitatingly and blushed. There had not been much talk of love between them. It was not an overworked word in their lives.

He put his hands on her shoulders and turned her lightly around.

"I will not 'love'"—he used the word with a mockery that hid embarrassment—"at all if you don't march to the table there and fetch that book. And, Anne, bring that last page of the manuscript,

too. There's something I thought of changing."

He watched her as she crossed to the table and fumbled among the papers.

"Look what you are doing!" he cried sharply. "There! The ink has gone over on those notes! How careless you are! Why couldn't you have looked at what you were doing?" He was sop-
ping up the ink with his blotters.

He did not notice that she did not reply until he had satisfied himself as to the amount of harm. Then he looked at her. She was holding to the edge of the table, her eyes dilated.

"I—I didn't see it," she answered his look.

"Well, don't act as if it were a tragedy. But you must be careful. You did that same thing just the other day."

He saw her chin quiver. Above everything, he hated tears. He put an arm about her.

"No harm done—just some blotters gone to the bad. Never mind."

She clung to him. He wondered if she were going to cry, to make a scene. She never had. She swallowed once and raised her head.

"It's dreadful to be so awkward," she said. "Now get comfy, Ames."

His good humor was restored, and he stretched out in his chair, closed his eyes, and waited for her to begin.

She began as usual, and he smiled faintly as he listened to the words of the writer he loved and basked luxuriously in the interpretation she gave; it was possible for her to gild even those words by her charm. Suddenly he opened his eyes and frowned.

"What was that? I didn't catch that," he said sharply.

She hesitated.

"Oh," she said deprecatingly, "no wonder you didn't catch it. I missed a line."

"Missed a line!" Cataclysm was voiced.

She moved restlessly and turned the shade of the lamp a trifle.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I don't know what made me."

Then she began again, reading more slowly. Sargent did not get back into his dream; the frown did not quite go away. There seemed something stilted in Anne's words. Then he spoke again and there was distinct irritation in his voice.

"I wish you'd keep your mind on what you are doing! Read that last sentence again. I didn't get the sense of it. Surely that wasn't the right word, was it?"

"I—I—don't know."

"Look, then." He had never spoken so sternly to her. These were no light matters, these carelessnesses.

Anne put down the book and stood up.

"I think, Ames, that my head aches and I'm tired. Will you do without the reading to-night?"

He stared at her. He saw her hands gripping each other. She was pale, and there was a strange expression on her face, almost like fear.

"What are you afraid of, Anne?"

She did not answer and he felt a quick pity; she was so slight, so pretty.

"What are you afraid of?" he repeated. "Surely not of me! I suppose you can have headaches, though you never had before. Of course, dear, don't read, then."

She held out her hands suddenly to him and then drew them as suddenly back.

"I'll go upstairs?"

It displeased him that there should be a question in her voice. He was not a tyrant. She waited, but he picked up the book she had laid down and settled back with an air that bespoke exclusion.

She turned, bumped annoyingly into a chair, and almost ran across the long room. Then came a thud and a cry. He sprang up. Anne had run directly into the edge of a half-open door. She was white and gasping and there was a tiny trickle of blood on her forehead. He was stormily, pityingly angry.

"What is the matter with you? Why don't you look what you are doing? You——"

He stopped, halted by the look on her face. She was leaning against the door, both hands spread out and clutching the frame on either side. He saw fear, sick, deadly fear before him. He stepped forward.

"Anne——"

"I—I—" she interrupted him,

speaking with an effort at a smile that drew her lips back strangely from her teeth, "I'll tell you something—No—let me go, Ames! Just awkward—Let me go!" And she pulled her hands almost roughly from his and fled out and up the stairs.

Ames Sargent went back to the fire and stood there. He could not find the meaning for his broken hour or for the other, slighter things that he had noticed. Probably it was just because Anne was a woman, and he was learning, after two years, some of her moods.

She came down a little later, smiling, and tucked her arm through his as they went in to dinner. It passed as usual with her chatter, and they planned together a jaunt for the week-end. Before they were quite through, John Norton came in, and the coffee was taken to the fireplace in the drawing-room. He saw Anne turn swiftly to Norton with a tilt of her chin that always preceded a question of moment to her. He listened for the question as he sipped his coffee, but it did not come, unless he could call her eager, straight gaze a question. He could almost do that. He was tempted to leave the room and then come suddenly back and see if there were a shade more intimacy between the two or any change from their attitude during his presence. Then he flushed at the thought and felt contempt for his half suspicion.

After Norton had gone, he reached out and caught Anne's hand and drew her to him. She rubbed her soft cheek against his.

"And how is the dear bumped head?" he whispered.

He felt her fingers stiffen slightly, and into her face there flashed again that something that looked like fear; it tightened the muscles about her mouth, dilated her eyes. Queer!

From day to day he found himself watching for that look. Often he did

not find it in her gay good-fellowship, and then suddenly it would flame out again. He could not probe to the cause. Sometimes he wondered if, after all, it were a fancy of his, a something about her that he had never noticed, but which had always been there. It seemed to follow the smallest things, to follow nothing at all that he could see. The reading hour was distinctly touched by it, and it gradually was shortened at both ends. He was afraid of Anne's look of fear. He could not bring himself to speak of it, but he watched for it and was glad to lop off the hours that seemed to bring it. He discovered that she was happiest when the reading hour was spent in the firelight, and he noted how she led him to talk, and how she saved for that time her own small problems and interests.

Often he knew that John Norton came in during the afternoons. Anne told him so, saying that he stopped there on his way to the hospital on his operating days. These visits did not really widen the small rift in Sargent's content, for his book was progressing as he liked and the days were very full of it.

But half-realized suspicion sprang suddenly into life on the afternoon when Anne proposed a startling thing. She asked if she might go to the Western coast just for the journey and to see some relatives there. While he was busy with publishers, proofs, and the mechanical part of his book, he would miss her very little. She really was fagged and wanted to make the journey—had always wanted to. She made the request without hesitation, quite as if she had formulated it in advance. She stood and smiled casually and promulgated her remarkable idea.

He did not say to her that he knew she hated to travel alone, that she hardly knew the Western relatives, that she had always been devoted to the revision of proofs. He looked at her



He would sit
there among his books
and let the hours pass.

silently, met her straight gaze, and said, quite as casually as she had spoken:

"Why, surely, Anne, if you want to go. When do you want to start?"

"I think any time now."

As a dealer in words, he noted that as a queer way to speak of a pleasure trip—as if it were something to be necessarily done, to be got out of the way, the sooner, the better, when a certain time had arrived.

"Well, then, I'll see to your tickets and reservations."

"You are always so good to me."

He looked at her, standing on the rug clasping and unclasping her fingers. There was enough that was pathetic about the droop of her head to make him draw her to him.

"And what do you suppose I am going to do without you?"

"Oh, that is it!" she cried, with a tilt of her chin. "How will you do without me? That is what I am to you, isn't it? Your helper. You would never want me if I couldn't help, would you?"

He laughed.

"What are you trying to make me say?"

"I was just asking if that wasn't the important part of me—my help."

"Anne! What is it that you are afraid of all the time?"

She gave him a startled glance.

"Now what is it? Come!"

"I'm afraid you wouldn't want me if I were not useful to you."

He dropped her hand. She was not telling him the truth. The flare of fear that had grown familiar was not in her face.

It was there, though, when he bade her good-by in her compartment on the train. He had never seen it so strong. It dulled her eyes; her gaze on his face seemed unfocused and vague; the fear had flamed high. She clutched him, and an answering premonition took him.

"Shall I drop everything and go with you, little love?"

"Almost—yes," she whispered. "No, no, go on with the work. It won't be long." Then, as if she had something that must be said, "You know I'm a wretched hand at writing letters. Don't expect much in that way. Just don't worry."

Now why had she said that, he wondered, as he walked home. Did she intend not to write? Why drop that small sinker of inference?

Seven days to the coast, two days to write a letter, seven days back—sixteen days. Ames Sargent walked up and down his library and calculated. Anne had dropped as far away from his world as if she had never been. It would have been so easy to send a message; it would not have taken her five minutes. To be sure, she had intimated that she would not write.

He crossed the floor again and again. There were piles of proof sheets waiting there on his table, and still he

walked back, then again. And under his feet he was treading a something that sought to live, a germ—a shameful one—of the things that had perplexed him. In the sixteen and a half days that had passed since Anne had gone away, he had not seen or heard of John Norton! There! The hideous thing had got free; it had mounted to a level with his reason. It brought with it the word "Hush!" the tone that had tinctured it; Anne's swift motion toward John Norton every time he came in; the undisplayed understanding between them, too small to be put into words, too large not to touch a man who had dealt in impressions.

A bunch of letters came. He ran over them swiftly. Nothing. Then he put on his hat and overcoat, went into the street, and hailed a cab.

"Fast!" he said to the man.

He was almost surprised when the girl in the waiting room told him that Doctor Norton was in his private office. He stood stiffly for a half hour until his turn came. Then he walked in, closed the door, and stood before it.

John Norton looked up from his desk.

"Hello!" he said.

The casualness of it touched the flame within Ames Sargent until it seethed through him. He stepped forward. Norton was looking at him with a straight, level gaze that held understanding; and against that understanding he was suddenly impelled to defend himself—and not so much himself as Anne. He had a quick impulse to get in between Anne and any understanding in the eyes of any other man. It was his business, the new impulse said—his business to protect her. If this man thrumming his penholder against the edge of the desk knew more than he did about her, it was his business not to acknowledge it. There was a vision of Anne, slim and young. What was he for but to protect? At any rate, he

was not going to acknowledge anything to that other man.

He took his hand out of his coat pocket. There was something there he had dropped in before he left home. There was a cigarette case there, too. He extracted a cigarette from it with firm fingers.

"Bad business to interrupt you in working hours, John," he said, as firmly as his fingers moved, "but I was near and dropped in to ask you to come to dinner to-night. The house is pretty still without Anne. I'm feeling the need of company."

"Sorry I can't," said Doctor Norton. "You see, I'm still at the country place, and it's something of a journey. I'm staying in town very little."

"I see. You're enthusiastic for the country, to stay so late."

"Yes. I like the open. I always stay as long as I can."

"Of course. But I'll let you off early."

"If you'll postpone it, Sargent, until I'm in town. It will be only a few days more that I'll have the long trip to make."

"Surely. We'll have a visit later, then. Let me know the first night you're in town."

"I'll be glad to," said Doctor Norton. Their eyes met, wary, cool.

"Well, I'll go along then. The outer office is full of people waiting for you."

"It's apt to be full this time of day."

"I suppose so. You'll let me know when you're staying in town?"

"Yes. Thank you," and Doctor Norton turned to the buzzer on his desk.

Ames Sargent went down in the elevator with every nerve on the outside of his skin; his clothes rubbed against them; the cold air set them to tingling; a million needles touched him.

He went straight home into the warm half light of his library. Well, that was it, then. Norton knew where Anne was. As sure as he was alive, he knew where

she was. They certainly had brazenness enough. And what was he to do about it? Let it alone and wait and see what they would do?

Across the room he saw himself in the mirror. He looked a thousand years old to himself, gray, stooped, heavy-limbed. No wonder she liked Norton. He remembered how alert the younger man looked, how youth lived in every move he made. He even recalled the clutch of the doctor's hand on the desk edge, firm and strong. He looked at his own hands—flaccid, soft, the hands of a man who dreamed. No wonder.

Well, he would let it alone. He would sit there among his books and let the hours pass until they made some move. He took the thing out of his pocket and put it in the table drawer. That would only point the way to Anne's name in large type in the newspapers. There were other ways. There was surely at least one way that would be dignified, one way of meeting this condition that was not common, that would not delight the rabble. He owed it to himself to do it in that way, but most he owed it to her, for he had taken her youth and merged it with his dullness, had made her a ticking little instrument like her own typewriter, had appropriated her bloom as one of his own trappings. Was this the fear he had seen?

There was where she had sat almost every evening for two years. Dullness complete and entire to her, of course. Not to him; he had been old enough to want just that and selfish enough to give her nothing else. It was due, therefore, to her that he wait to see what she would do; then his amend would be to think of some quiet way to set her free. It was all deadly natural. Youth seeks youth.

But in how bald and sordid a way they had done this! Did they mean it just as a liaison? Would she come back and sit by his fire again? Oh,



"Here is some one who couldn't do without you," he said.

they could not! Even their youth would not let them do that. But why—why? Was that what she had been afraid of all these months—that he would find them out, that he would interfere with what was going on? Had it been going on? If so, then why had she done this last thing—made all these absurd, unnecessary plans about a journey? Was there still something he did not understand, or was it just the old tawdry story? He put his hand out to the evening paper folded on his table.

"Right there," he said aloud, "there

are a dozen just such things recorded. Is this one of them?"

He got up and went upstairs and into her room. He went to her dressing table and took up and handled some little mysterious articles of ivory and silver. He turned them over in his hands. He went to her closet and opened the door. Some of her clothes hung there; there was a faint perfume about them, a soft, powdery scent that was like her, that was dainty and elusive. Then he went back to her dressing table and laid his head down among the trinkets. One

was a little enameled box he had bought her. It was sweet smelling, too. He drew it under his cheek as he lay there.

He heard the dinner gong sound through the quiet house and got up slowly; he was not going to advertise anything unusual to the servants. He went downstairs, where the maid looked at him curiously. He had not dressed for dinner. There was the print of something square on his cheek.

When he went back into the library after the meal had been served, he had made up his mind. Rather, it had made itself up, and in the same instant, he had spoken gayly to Marie and asked for another cup of coffee. He closed the library door quickly. It was all a mistake, a hideous misunderstanding; there was some reason for it all; the little white saint he knew was not that thing!

No, she was not that. He said to the still room that he would wait calmly and trust her; he would take up his work and wait for her to explain. No! No! A million times no! The blood rushed to his heart. He was not as old as that, as cool-blooded as that! He would know—he would know now! He was no dull, dead thing, to fumble with manuscripts and wait!

He did not open the closed drawer, although he thought of it. No. His fingers were strong enough. He would rather do it with his fingers, anyhow. He would like to sink them into flesh, if there should be need for it.

He caught the last train at the station only because the sleet had made it late. He knew how to get to John Norton's house, the country place that the doctor loved too well to leave. He laughed aloud. Norton must love it very much to stay down there in such weather. He would be there by eleven o'clock and then he would know. There were times to be dignified and reserved. This was not one of the times.

There was a sheet of ice over the

platform at the station. He could hardly keep his footing across the street and up the road to the little house where John Norton and his mother spent their summers. She was in town; he had seen her just the other day. Of course.

He was not thinking; just then he was not reasoning. He was acting under the force of something stronger than reason. He was glad he was not so old, so bookish, after all. There was blood in his veins, not thin milk.

A trailing vine slapped his face icily as he went through the gate. There was a row of stark bushes that rattled as he brushed them. The grass was stiff; it seemed to break off sharply under his feet.

A broad light shaft struck across the lawn from a side window, which he must pass before he could ring the bell as furiously as he intended to ring it. He looked in as he went and halted. The blood that had been choking his heart sank. He stopped breathing.

Anne's back was toward him. He saw the loose coil of dark hair at her neck. Then she turned and lifted her face to Doctor Norton, with the old, quick motion that presaged something. She was not smiling; she was grave. Yes, it was a grave thing—at least she knew that.

He saw Doctor Norton take both her hands confidently as if he had the right and draw her toward the door. He was talking eagerly. Across the length of the room he held her two hands, opened the door, and she passed out of sight. He had not kissed her. The watcher loosened his tightened fingers to rap sharply on the glass.

John Norton looked. He crossed and unlocked the long window. Sargent stepped over the sill, and the two men faced each other. Then Doctor Norton stepped back and locked the door through which Anne had gone and put the key in his pocket.

"What do you mean by this?" he said, his voice very low and distinct.

Ames Sargent did not answer. He took two steps toward the other man, who stepped forward, too, and laughed shortly as he did it.

"I knew you'd be just such a blazing, infernal fool as you are! I knew it would come out like this! But she was suré it wouldn't. I had to let her have her way."

They were nearly touching now. John Norton raised his hand as if to push the other back and then dropped it.

"I don't know whether you'll have sense enough to understand when you're told—to see your damnable selfishness and how she tried to shield you and let no one know but me!"

"What?"

"That she was going blind. You should have known it. She lived with you, worked with you when she couldn't see across the room, and you were too self-interested to see it."

The room was dark to Ames Sargent, and then he drank a glass of water, which Norton handed to him. He sat down quite still, and the surgeon spoke again.

"You don't deserve to know anything, and but for her sake I wouldn't bother with you. She came to me nearly a year ago because she couldn't see distinctly. I examined her eyes and found opacities—congenital. I told her it meant blindness before there could be an operation. I wish you could have seen her take the news, that gallant little thing—with her head up! Her thought was of you. You were in the midst of that cursed book, must not be distracted. She was so very useful; she must go right along as well as she could as long as she could. And you must not be told; your profound thoughts must not be agitated just because she was going blind."

"I could have struck you a dozen

times when I've been at your house. I've never seen a woman like her—the sand, the unadulterated nerve that she displayed. She walked down to meet you because it was her custom, though she took her life in her hands every time she stepped out. She had a knowledge of your work and how to keep it going that was superhuman. You never saw anything. I've seen her grope for the back of her chair. I've seen her refuse dishes at table because she couldn't see to manage them. I've seen— Oh, my God! And you, you dumb fool—"

He walked to the window and stood there. A rattle of sleet against the glass made a sharp clamor. He turned back.

"She didn't want you to know until I had operated. I feel pretty sure of success, but one can never tell. There's not much room in eyes for slips. It was her plan to let you think she had gone away until she was out of the woods. Foolish, but she said you wouldn't be anxious—that you wouldn't notice, and then, if it went right, you'd have been spared the trouble of it all. I oughtn't to have allowed it, but I—couldn't help it. I will operate in the morning. It's deadly to do it myself, but it would be more deadly to trust to any one else—"

He broke off. There was an uneven step in the hall, the sound of trailing fingers on the door. He opened it quickly and took her hands again and drew her into the room.

"Here is some one who couldn't do without you," he said.

That some one wondered why she clung so to him and loosed so quickly the hands that were to give her sight in the morning. He held her tightly, and over her head his gaze met that of John Norton and he read in it a secret, but he read it in eyes that were clear and unashamed and very sad.

He put his lips down to the top of her head.

"Oh, Ames," she was saying brokenly, "I wish you had waited! Oh, it's good to have you here, though, to hold tight to! I needed some one to hold tight to. But I hated to have you bothered. So I teased him to do this. I hated to bother you."

"Oh, Anne! Anne!" he groaned.

"But I won't let you stay for to-morrow."

"Do you think I could leave you if I wanted to? How selfish you must think me not to have known!"

"Oh, no. I was very clever about it. The doctor says so. And it helped me bear it, because I was trying to keep it from you and stay with you as long as I could."

"Anne—tell me—is it possible that you love me?"

"Love you! Oh-h-h-h!" She lifted

her face, while over its pallor ran a glow that made it all shining.

When he spoke, he said huskily:

"I watched the fear in your face for months."

"Yes—the fear. It makes one sick, the fear of blindness. And then there was the other—"

"What other?"

"The greater fear—that you wouldn't care for me if I weren't useful—if I were a burden."

He held her close.

"I could almost hope that it will go wrong to-morrow, so I could show you how much I want you."

She shook her head.

"It won't go wrong. It can't. You'll hold my hand, and he is so skillful, this good friend of ours. I have no more fear. It won't go wrong."



AN OFFICER TO HIS BABY

THEY bid me note the giant you've become.
To me, you look a thing extremely wee,
Clutching a tiny fistie round my thumb,
As, lying snug, you bivouac on my knee.

I sit and trot you, dreaming of the day
When your fine limbs, now swathed in lawn and lace
By your proud mother, shall, without delay,
Wear the stout khaki, march with dauntless grace.

Pray God for peace then, little stanch recruit!
An odd wish for a soldier? Nay, but heed!
Go with my blessing, and my smiles to boot,
If war then mutters; be a man indeed.

Meanwhile, I marvel at my clumsiness.
I who am passing deft in camp, afield,
Spoil your equipment, crease your snowy dress,
Break your light slumbers, tramping heavy-heeled.

Your shrill commands, though loud, are seldom clear.
You're somewhat "bandy;" I repeat, you're small.
Yet, Captain Dimples, I salute you! Here
I'm just your meek lieutenant after all.

EWING HALL.



When she walked to high mass each Sunday at ten o'clock.

Maman and Enoch Arden

By Ruth Wright Kauffman

Author of "Make-Up," "Let Me Dress You," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT HENCKE

The true story of a modern Enoch Arden in war-torn France.

THE white streamers that tied Marie Jean's lace bonnet were always without wrinkles and starched; her apron exactly outlined her well-corseted figure; and if she wore sabots while she worked in her mother-in-law's *potager* in the village of St. Pierre, there were no neater shoes than hers when she walked to high mass each Sunday at ten o'clock. None went there with a rounder face or with ruddier smiles, and none leaned

on the arm of a more stalwart Breton than her François.

Her François had been hers only a short year, but Marie had become in every sense a daughter to Madame Jean. François' mother had not made lace all her life without being able to appreciate the advent of a daughter who could *faire la cuisine*, and *maman* was a mother-in-law indeed.

St. Pierre, with its rocks and barren stretches of coast and cliff, with the At-

Iantic beating its way into the Channel a few miles to the north, seemed a desolate place; but was anything desolate when Marie could stroll with her man among those rocks as evening began to fall and the red sun sank yonder in the sea where the great ships steamed toward America?

That was in July 1914, when the liners traveled fearlessly to and fro, and the oilers and cargo ships needed no convoys against submarines, and the gales off the corner coast of Brittany were the sole terror of the fisher folk. Even the storm terror was not Marie's; François Jean was a blacksmith.

Then, at five o'clock on Saturday afternoon, August 4th, the tocsin sounded, and the drum ominously rumbled through the village streets. Before the fishermen could be gathered in, François had to go. Marie shed tears, but François was brave and strong; François would drive the Germans from Paris, and François would come back to her with a decoration. To be sure, the forge would remain idle, but the little house could almost keep itself.

The little house was, nevertheless, joyless. When Monsieur Nozais, the rich widower at the end of the village, came to ask if Marie would "make the kitchen" for him, Marie sought *maman's* advice, as she sought it in all things, *maman* sagely computed what the wage would mean for the bank account per year, and Marie did her best for the old man.

François wrote: "I am well. I miss you. I have had a letter from you." Marie tried to be patient, and if she sometimes walked alone along those rocks and watched the empty wake of the setting sun, or a limping merchantman towed by a gray destroyer, she made herself remember that, one day, her François would come home with his decoration.

Maman now helped with the gar-

den and pottered about the house. Her eyes were getting old for lace making—she was seventy-eight—but her spirit was indomitable and as young as Marie's, and she had little rheumatism. Marie, leaving Monsieur Nozais comfortably smoking his pipe after a hot supper, would return to her empty home and cook a good cabbage or turnip or bean soup for *maman*. As the younger woman was faithful to her François, so she was solicitous of Madame Jean, and Madame Jean boasted of her daughter-in-law to the neighbors.

Madame Jean took small stock in her son's letters. Her mind's eye saw the upright, brawny smith, a replica of his father, and she waited his material return, but "I am well. I miss you. I have had a letter from you" was as inexplicable to her as the details of this modern warfare. She said her prayers thrice a day and trusted in the good God.

Monsieur Nozais was a small, cautious man of fifty-five. He had inherited the third best house in the village, with a high wall around it and thirty fruit trees in the garden. His wife, dead these ten years, had brought him a fat *dot* and presented him with no progeny. He was a lonely man. The housekeeper whom Marie replaced had made Monsieur Nozais' life a torment, as long-established housekeepers can. Marie was as spring flowers after dry autumn leaves. She cooked just to please his palate, she gave him as much cider as he wanted, she bought with discretion, and she stepped lightly. Her round face, a little flat from pulling her hair trimly away from the forehead under her cap, was always rosy, and her round dark eyes were bright. Monsieur Nozais acquired a habit of chivalry toward her in spite of himself. He knew all about François, but he missed Marie when she left him alone with his pipe.

Then, one day, came final news of François. His decoration was the deco-

ration of death. Wounded, he had lain mute in a hospital for weeks. Now it was all over.

Marie was crazed with grief. *Maman* wrung her hands for her only son. Monsieur Nozais went to a neighbor's and grumbled about his meals. But Monsieur Nozais' heart was touched. He put aside his caution. With overwhelming generosity, he offered to pay for a magnificent funeral and have the body shipped to St. Pierre. The military delays were many, but at last the railway brought the sealed box that must be straightway interred. The wreaths and flowers were finer than those for the last mayor. No man in St. Pierre had ever had a more elaborate farewell. Marie, in tearful gratitude, threw herself into her benefactor's arms, and *maman*, grimly looking on with faded eyes, looked on the future also.

For ten months Marie grieved—desperately. Then Monsieur Nozais, for the third time, asked her to become his wife. He would console her, he promised. *Maman* philosophically reasoned it thus:

"Thou art young. Thou hast thy life before thee. Thy little François has given his life for France. That is enough. It is thy duty, I, his mother, say so. I myself shall come and live with Monsieur Nozais, who has no mother. Thou shalt marry him. It is a proper proceeding, and the good Lord will approve."

Marie crept to François' grave that October night. She flung herself on the green turf. Her arms encircled the stone, white in the moonlight:

François

fils aimé

de

Mathilde Jean, veuve,
Mort Pour la France.

Que Dieu le bénit.

It was all over. The roses had long left her cheeks. If there were roses now, they belonged here. She would of course do as *maman* bade her. She would marry Monsieur Nozais. She did.

A large bearded man limped down the main road of St. Pierre, one leg off at the thigh, a thick crutch replacing it. He was dirty and tired and hungry. The street was dark; it was nine o'clock, and every light was out. He groped his way to a cottage, which had once been his.

There was every sign of desertion. Boards covered friendly doorways. The man stood still and stared, and the December wind beat about his pale face and whipped the sides of his gray-blue overcoat. He passed a weary hand over his forehead.

He doubtfully crossed the street. Supporting himself beside the wall, he rapped with his crutch. A candle showed through the glass. The door was opened.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said his former neighbor.

"Where is my mother, and where is Marie?" he demanded.

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* But thou hadst the finest funeral in St. Pierre! I—I saw thee buried! And the stone is there!"

"Where is my wife?"

The little woman stared up at him.

"Come," she said, "thou must know. Marie waited and wept. Oh, but she wept! She is now married to Monsieur Nozais. Thy mother lives there also."

The great figure seemed to lack comprehension. Then he turned away.

"That," he mumbled, "is the reward of being a prisoner!"

He started up the road.

"No, no, no!" screamed the woman. "Marie is not to be blamed! If thou wert prisoner, we did not know! They said thou wert dead! We had thy body



*"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, mon Dieu! But thou hadst
the finest funeral in St. Pierre! I—I saw thee
buried! And the stone is there!"*

—we had *somebody's* body! Thou must not harm Marie! I will come with thee!"

She enveloped herself in a cape. She kept pace with the crutch and the single leg on the frozen road.

"Let me arrange all!" she panted. "Do not be hasty! Let me do all!"

The figure beside her made no comment. The woman's ears tingled with the cold and that sound of the crutch which she could not shut out. It was not a mile to the house at the end of that long, dark line of houses, but the walk was endless. The woman tried to make conversation. She wanted to ask questions. She wanted to go into

details of news, but the words choked into a nervous catch in her throat when she turned her head toward her large, resolute companion. The silence of St. Pierre was agonizing.

She counted the houses. Here was the post office, then the church, next that row of stone houses so much alike —Madame Miraille, Monsieur Gaillard, the dressmaker's—

They reached the house at the end of the village. They pounded at the door. The woman clutched at the man's arm.

"For the love of God, let me speak!"

A window rattled. An angry voice called. The neighbor responded:

"Madame Nozais! Marie! I must see her!"

"It is too late."

"Don't wake monsieur."

"We are abed," came Marie's clear voice.

The figure on the pavement shivered.

"Hist!" The woman's voice was almost a whisper. "Marie, I must see thee—now—I must! Marie, come quickly!"

A pause. The outer door opened.

"Come in, then. Thou wilt blow out the candle," said Marie.

The great figure stepped in also. Like a shadow from the past, it entered the room. The candlelight fell full on the pale face. Marie looked unsteadily. The neighbor caught the candle. Marie dropped.

The house was alight. *Maman* appeared in all her night habiliments. Monsieur Nozais' nightcap was twisted rakishly to one side. The little neighbor woman fluttered helplessly. Marie opened her eyes and sat up. The figure was still there.

Monsieur Nozais falteringly gave his explanation of the marriage. François' face grew black. He moved a step nearer to the new husband threateningly. He moved still nearer and, suddenly letting go of his crutch, threw his great body on the little man and caught at his throat. The neighbor screamed and pulled futilely at François' clothes. *Maman* gave a quick command to desist, and François, alive to the tone, loosened his hold and was helped to rise.

Madame Jean ordered silence.

"It is my fault. I could not bear to see the child weep. I was wrong, but she is now Monsieur Nozais' wife. I will leave in the morning. It is better so. I will look after thee, my son. But we gave thee the stone and the funeral. What more could we? *She* is no longer thy wife."

Marie was gathering her senses. She giddily rose. She flung her arms about François' neck.

"I am *thy* wife!" she wailed. "I *will* be thy wife! I will not be another's! I obeyed *maman*! I did what she told me! Always I have been her dutiful daughter! But I am thy wife now! François—thou art truly my François? I am thy wife! I am thy wife!"

Madame Jean watched sternly. Monsieur Nozais, aghast, shuddered, but made no move. His humiliation overpowered him, but he somehow trusted to Madame Jean and knew that she would put it right.

"Thou art not his wife," declared François' mother. "This cannot be. It is my fault, but the banns have been said, the vows taken. Thou art the wife of the master of this house."

Monsieur Nozais shrugged his shoulders. He might as well speak.

"It is equal to me," he said. "She is no consolation. She was a pleasure before the word came—and the funeral, which I paid for. Then one could not but be sorry. But for these six weeks, every day of the six weeks, she weeps day and night. If she is my wife, it is equal to me. I will do my duty, but it is no happiness to have her. I have paid for the funeral—I remember that. I helped with the stone, but it brings me no joy."

Marie clung to François. He was stupefied with amazement and weariness. He could only take his mother's word, as he had always done.

"If thou art his wife," he finally said, "thou art not mine."

"There is only one way to decide," exclaimed the little neighbor. "We must go to the *mairie* to-morrow. They will tell us. One thing is certain. Marie cannot be the wife of both monsieur and of François. Yet François must be given a bed. He is very tired. Dost not see?"

A strange procession filed to the *mairie* the next day—Madame Jean leading, her lips set firmly; Monsieur Nozais disconsolately walking beside a white-faced Marie; the neighbor; a half dozen other neighbors; a limping poilu; and a crowd of round-eyed children. The whole town fluttered over the affair. As the procession passed the cemetery, it paused, and *maman* proudly pointed out the stone.

"There is no question," said the mayor, when the story was fully told and every one had talked at once. "She belongs to the man to whom she was first married. The other marriage is no marriage. It was regrettable, but all is well now."

Marie smiled faintly. The mayor put her relaxed hand into Francois' hand.

"Go," he said kindly, "and look after him well. He has given a leg to France—so much the better." He kissed the young woman on each cheek. "There," he declared, "it is as if thou wert a bride again, *hein?*"

Marie smiled more happily. It was true, then, Monsieur Nozais looked relieved. *Maman* nodded sagely; she knew that she had arranged it all.

"Come," said Francois, gathering his slow wits. He held out a friendly hand to Monsieur Nozais. "We will go to the café and open a bottle of good wine. We will drink together. Is it not so, *maman*?"



WAR IN SPRING

THE glow of war's red glory fades
Before triumphant hosts of spring,
Who all the waiting world invades
With bird song and with blossoming.
What though the bugle calls? Its notes
Are rivaled in the robins' throats.

When centuries' slow-sifted dust
Shall dim this story's yellowed page,
And all the conflict—just, unjust—
Be crowded from life's changing stage,
Still shall the magic hands of Spring
Be bent on primrose fashioning.

These mournful fields where men have bled
And women's hopes were crucified
With daisies will be garlanded,
With violets and jonquils pied;
Young lovers shall know April's thrall,
As from days immemorial.

It blooms, it dies—the pomp of kings,
Like foam flowers on time's deathless sea,
While springtime's sweet rememberings
Recur with bud and melody.
The black, black dream of hate and pain
Is banished by the lark's refrain.

ALINE MICHAELIS.

The Small-Town Sport

By Conrad Charles Smith

ILLUSTRATED BY R. L. LAMBDIN

A spoiled and petted heiress—a real man—thrills
—and an adventure away out of the ordinary.

IT was midnight in central Louisiana, but not dark. A full moon shone down whitely, silvering the surface of the little river. From the rear platform of a Pullman, directly over the stream, Miss Paula McClendon, heiress to the McClendon millions, was seriously considering a leap into the water thirty feet below the bridge. It was not suicide. Although life was proving a burden on Miss McClendon's pretty, unoccupied hands, she had no intention of ending it.

The figure of a man, sitting silent and motionless on the bank of the stream below, was the immediate cause of her half-insane thoughts, but behind that were various and sundry other causes. First of all, Miss McClendon's nerves, young and splendid though they were, had rebelled against the ceaseless round of gayety and pleasure to which she had subjected them, and a prominent New York specialist, whose fee had run well up into the thousands, had ordered a complete rest of at least three months. Then her father, perhaps because he had made the first of his millions there, had chosen a dinky little farm in Louisiana as a proper place for her to take that rest. And last, but not least to Miss McClendon's mind, her train was being delayed. Up ahead, beyond the engine, she heard workmen at work on the trestle that led to the bridge. And when the rear-end flagman had passed through the car an hour or so before, she had queried:

"How long will we be here?"

"Three hours at the least, miss," he had answered.

All the other passengers, including her father and her aunt, had gone peacefully back to sleep after a few drowsy questions, but Miss McClendon, fully dressed and sleepless, had been fuming and fretting on the rear platform for a full three-quarters of an hour. The air pump on the engine irritatingly mingled with the sound of the workmen in sporadic, monotonous outbursts. The hot summer breeze spitefully fanned her face in intermittent puffs, furnishing a doubtful relief from the heat for a second, only to die away and leave her almost gasping for breath.

"I don't see why in the jumping Jerusalem dad had to select a country like this!" she said fiercely.

Then, standing on the steps and sweeping a glance along the bank of the stream below, she saw the man, and because there was no one to observe her in such an undignified position, she sat down on the top step and for the next half hour, elbows on her knees, chin cupped in her hands, amused herself with speculations concerning him. Who was he? What was he doing there? Although he appeared to be watching the bridge, he was not a paid watchman, for had he been, he would have been on the bridge. Naturally, he was from the village whose lights twinkled from a hill a half mile away. "A small-town sport," she finally decided, "mooning over his ladylove."

But the mere term, a small-town

sport, does not convey by itself half what it connoted to Miss McClendon's mind. A few days before she had explained to her aunt:

"A small-town sport, my dear aunt, is an animal grown only in the small towns of our own free country. You can meet him 'most any Sunday on the country roads, trying to make a '07-model flivver run. He wears a five-dollar Palm Beach suit, a dollar-and-a-half straw hat, a dollar shirt, and a fifteen-cent collar, and a fifty-cent necktie of a pattern so loud you can hear it coming round the corner. Usually he is an office man of some kind, gets about twelve a week, and wouldn't trade jobs with Woodrow Wilson. About once every six months, he saves up twenty-five whole dollars, goes to the city, and spends it all in a single wild night of reckless extravagance. Then, when he comes back, he tells his fellows about the swell time he had. He thinks slapstick comedy is art, had rather see Charlie Chaplin perform than John Drew act, has a vaulting ambition to shake hands with Theodore Roosevelt, and thinks that the people whose likenesses appear in photogravure in the magazine section of the Sunday newspapers are the real 'four hundred' of society."

In bare justice to Miss McClendon, however, it must be admitted that her views of life had not always been cynical. Three years before, she had entertained dreams of living on a pretty little farm somewhere, when the good-looking man of her dreams should come and sweep her off her feet with his wooing. And she had planned to raise children and chickens, while the man grew corn and potatoes and other crops.

But the good-looking man had failed to materialize, and a socially ambitious aunt, an ancestry, half real, half faked, that dated back to the landing of the Pilgrims, the influence of her father's millions, and three years at New York

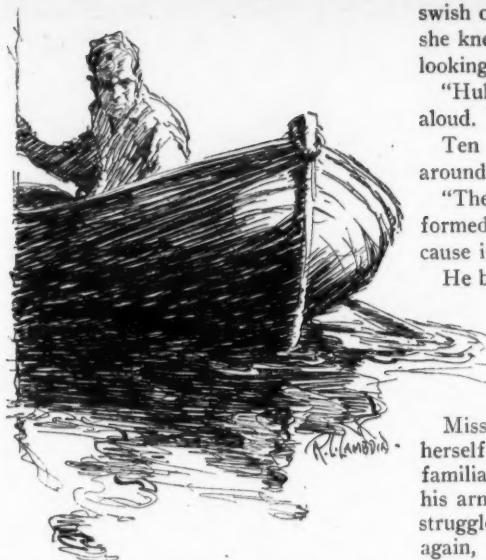


The rattle of the oarlocks and the swish of
the man in the boat

and Newport had removed such ideas as far from Miss McClendon's pretty head as the average American citizen thought his country was from the war.

And to-night, nerves frazzled, thoroughly, wholly bored with life, she sat on the rear steps of a Pullman and seriously considered a leap into the water some thirty feet below. Of course it was foolish, insane, idiotic, but the infinitely complex and complicated mechanism that the specialist had called her nervous system was deranged, abnormal. She had not slept in a week.

Abruptly she arose, stepped down to the ties and thence to the steel truss rods of the bridge, slightly beyond and below the ties, stood there for an instant, swaying, poised herself, and leaped outward and downward in a graceful dive. It was farther than she had thought, and she struck the water with a force that almost stunned her. And she had forgotten something, too



oars drew nearer, paused, and she knew that was looking for her.

—her clothes. The suction of the water as she went down wrapped her skirts tightly around her legs, and when she finally came to the surface, she found that they clung there, hampering her movements. She gave it up after a moment and swam entirely with her hands, making for the supporting pier of the bridge in the center of the stream.

At the sound of oarlocks from the bank, she looked backward over her shoulder. The man who had been sitting on the bank was in a small skiff.

"Might have known he'd use the boat," she grunted to herself as she struggled on.

She reached the pier and swam round it into the shadow of the bridge. The thin outer coating of the concrete had cracked and shelled off in places, and, groping with her hands, she found such a place and held herself afloat with the tips of her fingers.

The rattle of the oarlocks and the

swish of oars drew nearer, paused, and she knew that the man in the boat was looking for her.

"Huh! Bet he can't swim!" she said aloud.

Ten seconds later, the boat shot around the pier, almost upon her.

"Then you lose," the man in it informed her. "But I used the boat because it was quicker and better."

He brought the boat close to her, laid the oars down, and attempted to lift her into it. But the treacherous, jumpy little thing almost capsized, and he desisted.

Miss McClendon struggled to free herself. She did not at all like the easy, familiar manner in which he had put his arms around her. But even as she struggled, he balanced the boat and tried again, with more success. She stood up, half angry with him. The boat rocked perilously. She staggered, nearly fell, and found herself in his arms again. But though she resented it, she allowed him to hold her till he had assisted her to a seat in the stern. He took his seat at the oars and rowed slowly out from under the bridge. For the first time, though she had stared at him for a full half hour in the white moonlight, she noticed that he was a big man physically, and pleasant to look upon. He was not good looking—not in a movie-actor way—but his face, his clothes, and every line of him gave an impression of quiet strength.

"How did you happen to fall off?" he asked, as he turned the boat.

There was an easily discernible contempt in Miss McClendon's sneering smile. That was about what she had expected such a man to say—"How did you happen to fall off?"

"I didn't fall off. I jumped off," she answered.

"You jumped off? I don't understand."

She shrugged her shoulders disdainfully.

"Of course not. You're not expected to understand. Your crowd is always wondering about the upper classes. I dare say that's why the newspapers print so many silly lies about us. I was bored and wanted to see what you would do. Do you understand that?"

He laid down the oars and regarded her quizzically. Miss McClendon was unaware that at that moment, in spite of her disheveled appearance, she presented rather an attractive picture. Her hair was part way down, and little wet curls clung alluringly about her face. And her dripping clothes, too, clung close to every part of her body, revealing, yet concealing, her slim figure.

The man facing her laughed easily, good-humoredly.

"So my crowd is not expected to understand the class to which you belong?" he queried. "Well, Miss Paula McClendon—oh, I know you; I've seen your photographs in the papers, you know—I'll bet you a golden sunset against your wet shoes that this particular one of my crowd can diagnose your case correctly. What say? Want to take me up?"

But beyond tilting her head a little higher as she gazed austere across the stream, Miss McClendon did not answer.

He laughed again.

"No?" he said. "Well, I'll give you my opinion, anyway. You're a living example of the fact that nature did not build the human body for pleasure alone. We must mix some work with our play. You've got a bad case of 'nerves,' and a specialist has very probably ordered a rest. Anyway, your father is taking you to his country place at Thornton, a place that is a fitting home for a princess, but which you have very likely designated a dinky little farm."

Miss McClendon swept him a cool, scornful glance.

"My dear man, if such is your opinion, you're quite welcome to it. I am not interested. I was bored when I jumped off the bridge. I find that you are boring me now. Kindly row me to the bank, assist me back to my train, and I will reward you liberally."

The man's head came up with a jerk. A steely glint flickered in his eyes.

"You may keep your money," he said quietly, almost too quietly. "I've quite sufficient for my needs."

"Don't be silly." She smiled disdainfully. "You need the money, of course, and I can easily afford it."

He leaned forward, picked up the oars, arrested the drifting of the boat toward the bank, and rowed back to the center of the stream. Miss McClendon shrugged her shoulders. Up on the trestle, in the white glare of the headlight, she could see workmen hurrying back and forth. The sound of hammering came to her ears.

"Now, Miss Paula McClendon, this situation is of your own choosing," the man said, "and I shall prolong it as long as I care to. When I'm through talking to you, I shall help you back to your train of course. Meantime, you can either listen to what I have to say or"—he jerked his head toward the shore—"swim ashore.

"It's a shame, isn't it?" he went on. "Here is a young woman, who, three years ago, gave every promise of being one of God's chosen few. Wealth, health, youth, and beauty were hers. At that time, before she became a snob, more than one real man must have wanted to marry her, for she is attractive—physically attractive, I mean. Even now, I find that my own opinion of her is being influenced by her physical beauty.

"But New York and Newport, late hours, expensive champagne, and a certain set of fashionable society have

dulled the glad, gay youth in her eyes and spoiled her almost irretrievably. And because a few men undoubtedly wanted to marry her for her father's millions alone, she scorned the real men who wanted her for herself and chose an Italian prince who must have been in Alaska when they were handing out brains and backbone in Italy."

Miss McClendon sat bolt upright, her indifference wholly gone.

"Sir! How dare you discuss my personal affairs?"

The man before her nodded approvingly.

"I like that," he said. "Your quick flash of anger shows that at least one good quality remains with you—loyalty. Even though it is misplaced, that remains with you. And it is misplaced, isn't it? The very fact that the prince is here in this country tells it all. His country is at war and needs men. Practically all of the real men of his country are at the front, fighting their country's battles. Why isn't he there, too, leading a regiment or a company, or, failing that, carrying a gun? You know the answer already. He hasn't the brains for the one nor the backbone for the other."

Miss McClendon gazed at him steadily.

"Why aren't you at the front yourself?" she asked. "The United States is at war, too, and needs men."

"Well put," he admitted. "But the young woman we were speaking of is not marrying me. She's engaged to the prince, and I'm trying to show you that he isn't a real man. What does it matter, though? Shakespeare was a good player in his day and lined out many a clean hit, but he fouled out at least once, didn't he? There's a whole lot in a name if that name happens to be a prince's. But what's the use of telling you this? You know it already, and you couldn't think less of him than you do now. You knew he wasn't even half

a man when you promised to marry him. But I want to talk to you about another subject—morality."

"Are you going to insult me?" she asked quickly. "I can't swim to the bank with these clothes on, but it seems as if I shall have to try."

He smiled and shook his head.

"No, I don't mean that kind of morality. I'm speaking of the kind that is less talked about. For instance, the dress you have on cost probably three hundred dollars, and you have ruined it for a foolish, thoughtless whim. That money devoted to the Red Cross would have saved a dozen soldiers' lives on the western front—men who are fighting that you and yours may be safe from the horror across the sea. Oh, I know what you are going to say. Your father has already given liberally. But what have you yourself given? How many pleasures have you denied yourself to help? And what does your careless, extravagant mode of life really bring you? Nothing. Less than nothing. I dare say a creature less satisfied with its existence could not be found on the top side of God's green earth to-night. And that, also, Miss Paula McClendon, comes under the head of morality."

Miss McClendon studied him thoughtfully. He was not at all the kind of a man she had expected. He was not awed or confused in the least by her presence, as so many of his class would have been. A quiet, sure strength seemed to pervade the very atmosphere in which he moved, and his superb physical manhood sent an intangible, atavistic longing surging through her veins. And he was rather more than half right about her mode of life. Vague thoughts of her dreams of earlier days flashed through her mind, and she sighed as she spoke:

"You're right. I hate it—all of it. But it's a hard job—living up to one's position as the McClendon heiress."

He nodded sympathetically.



Shot after shot followed in rapid succession.

"I know. You're not wholly to blame. Your aunt's socially ambitious."

"You understand, though," she added quickly, "that I still think it none of your business. And, besides, I don't think that you ought to say anything. You're a—a splendid specimen of a man yourself—physically, I mean—and you're not in uniform."

"I have orders to report to the Second Officers' Training Camp at Leon Springs, Texas. Does that satisfy you?"

"No." She shook her head. "If that's so, you ought to be studying a

manual of—of soldiering or—or drills or whatever it is that they study. You shouldn't be wasting your time."

"Perhaps I'm not wasting my time," he answered. "Do you see that bridge? Oh, I know it isn't much of a structure, but the very lifeblood of the traffic from this part of the country flows over it. Do you understand what it would mean if it were destroyed? The fall rains are about due, and this puny little stream will swell to a healthy-sized river. It would be months before that bridge could be replaced. Meantime, the efficiency of this whole section of

the country would be crippled. Perhaps I know of a plot to destroy it and am watching it."

Miss McClendon smiled.

"Well?" she queried.

"Oh, there are men here capable of doing it," he assured her. "We have our Germans the same as other parts of the country."

"I dare say, if there were any danger, the railroad officials would place a watchman on the bridge," she replied. "However, if you derive any pleasure from imagining yourself the hero of such an attempt——" She shrugged her shoulders expressively.

Up on the trestle for the past few moments workmen had been spiking the last rail into place, while others had been gathering up the tools and getting ready to leave. The rear-end flagman had come in from his post, too, and climbed aboard the train, all unnoticed by the two in the boat. A couple of short blasts from the whistle, and a slow, thunderous puff warned them. He bent forward quickly, seized the oars, fitted them to the locks, and took a couple of hasty strokes. But it was too late. Already the rear lights were dwindling. He gave it up after the third and leaned back, oars resting.

"It's no use," he said. "We can't catch it now."

The irregular exhaust of the workmen's motor car, following close behind the train, pierced the steady, ever-quickening puffs of the engine. A dull red flush mounted in Miss McClendon's face.

"I'm sorry—honestly," he apologized. "I didn't intend to make you miss your train."

"It's rather late to be sorry now, isn't it?" she asked, and her speech was on the verge of becoming pointed and cutting when the man leaned forward and held up his hand warningly.

"Sh-h! Listen!" he whispered.

She caught back the angry words

trembling on her lips and unconsciously held her breath for an instant, involuntarily obeying his whispered command. Mingling with the fast-dwindling puffs of the train, there came to her ears the scarcely audible swish of oars. For a long moment she sat tensely still, ears straining to catch that sound. Their own boat, under the impetus given by the man's oars, had drifted out of the center of the stream, so that the supporting pier of the bridge stood some thirty or forty feet behind and to the left. Came a long silence. Then something grated softly against the concrete on the other side of the pier, and the girl understood. A boat had come diagonally from a clump of bushes on the far side of the stream, hidden from them by the pier as they from it. She half turned in her seat and leaned to one side, trying to catch a glimpse of the boat on the other side of the pier.

"Sh-h! Be still!" the man at the oars warned again.

An irregular, yet busy tapping began.

"W-what is it?" she queried in a whisper so low that it barely reached his ears.

"They're drilling to plant the charge," he answered in the same low tone.

"Then there really was a plot to blow up the bridge? Oh, I'm so sorry—for what I said, you know."

"Can you swim to the bank?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Not in these clothes."

"They'll hear us sure if I try to row you to the bank."

She sat perfectly still for a moment, considering it. Then her hands flew up over her head to the catches on the back of her dress. Another instant, and she was wriggling free from the wet sleeves of her waist. She stood up then, allowed her dress to slide down around her knees to the muddy bottom of the boat, undid another skirt at her waist, let it fall, too, stepped cautiously

out of them both, and in the white moonlight stood before him for a dazzling instant in only her wet, clinging undergarments. Slowly, apprehensive of making even the slightest noise, she turned and stepped upon the seat in the stern, poising herself for a dive.

"Wait a minute," he whispered tensely. "You'll make a splash."

She turned, looked at him over her shoulder, and sat down warily. He leaned toward her, so that his voice would carry to her ears, and began to whisper earnestly:

"Listen! As things stand now, the odds are with them. There're two of them. But I know they're there, and they don't know I'm here. You can give me an equal chance if you want to, do you?"

She nodded quickly.

"Of course."

"Then listen. Slide off your seat into the water without making a splash, if possible, hold to the stern, and swim in a semicircle till the bow points diagonally across the river toward the bridge. Then give the boat a push. I'll be upon them that way before they know I'm coming."

She slid one leg cautiously over the side of the boat into the water and paused.

"Let me stay in the boat with you," she asked. "I—I might help."

"No." His hand went to a hip pocket. "There'll be shooting. I can't allow you to risk it."

She noted the steely glitter of the moonlight on the automatic as he laid it on the seat beside him. Without further argument—not because she was afraid, but because he wished it—she slid into the water. But her hold slipped, and a quick, involuntary movement of her arm brought her hand against the water with a distinct little splash. The drilling abruptly ceased. A silence still as midnight in a country

village spread over the river. At last a guarded tone floated around the pier:

"Vat vas dat?"

A laugh followed.

"A fish flounced," another voice answered.

The young woman in the water caught her breath with a gasp and began to swim slowly with the boat as directed. At last the bow pointed in the desired direction, and she paused, steadied the boat and herself, pushed forward with all her strength. The resistance of the boat threw her back into the water, and, swimming slowly on her back toward the bank, she watched it drift, marked a spot on the surface of the stream where the bow would come within the angle of the vision of the men on the other side of the pier, and waited tensely.

The bow of the boat reached the spot she had marked, crossed it, and the next instant, from behind the pier, a vivid streak of red stabbed the whiteness of the moonlight. Quite distinctly, mingling with the report of the gun, she heard the bullet crash through the bow of the boat, and noted that her man—unconsciously she had begun to think of him as her man—was crouching low and creeping forward in the boat. Another second and his own gun was answering. Shot after shot followed in rapid succession. Bright red streaks of fire punctuated the silvery moonlight in such bewildering confusion that she could not tell from whom they came.

"*Mein Gott, Karl, he's vinged me!*" she heard a voice exclaim in the midst of it all.

"Shut up!" his partner answered harshly.

Abruptly as they had begun, the shots ceased. At the same moment, because she had been unconsciously swimming all the while, Miss McClendon reached the shallow water next the bank and stood up, watching the man in the boat. He was reloading his automatic.



She grabbed the rope, and hurried back, stumbling,
half falling, down the bank.

The stern of another boat moved slowly around the pier into her view. In the white moonlight she could easily make out that a man in it was hastily pushing cartridges into a revolver.

"Hurry!" she called to her man. "He's loading, too!"

A sudden fear and horror gripped her as she saw the man in the second boat snap the cylinder back into his gun and creep forward behind the pier.

Her quick cry of warning was drowned out in the shot that followed. The man at whom it was aimed—her man—finished loading despite it, picked up an oar, and paddled, canoe fashion, straight toward the source of it. Two more shots rang out at him, slowly, distinctly, but they did not stop him. He paddled on straight into them. It was a splendid thing to do, and the young woman on the bank thrilled with the

bravery of it. A little silent prayer for his safety, too, formed on her lips as he was hidden from her sight by the pier.

No more shots came. Voices, whose words did not carry to her ears, muttered behind the pier. Something splashed in the water. At last the stern of the boat within her view moved slowly out from behind the pier, and she could easily distinguish the two men in it, one paddling, the other gripping his right forearm with his left hand. The other boat followed close, and both headed for the bank. As they did so, she began to understand the events of the last few seconds. While the other had put only three shots in his gun, her man had taken chances till he had finished loading, and now, because his gun was full and the other's empty, he held the whip hand and was bringing the two men to the bank, prisoners.

Still standing in the water, she watched them paddle to the bank till the bow of the first boat slid up on the sand. The man in it eyed her curiously. Her man stopped his boat some ten feet from the shore, and again she saw the moonlight gleam wickedly on the steel of his automatic as he ordered curtly:

"Get out!"

They got out and stood up on the bank.

But as her man slid the bow of his boat upon the bank, the uninjured one, measuring his time and distance accurately, sprang upon him and bore him to the bottom of the boat before he could drop his oar. Wide-eyed, motionless, Miss McClendon watched the struggle till, from the corners of her eyes, she saw the man on the bank seize an oar and lift it high above his head. Then, galvanized into action, she sprang upon the bank and attacked him with the fury of a young tigress. He dropped the oar and turned upon her with a grunted oath. A big and burly

man he was, but with his wounded arm he was no match for the athletic young woman who struggled with him. She seized his free arm and clung to it with a grim determination, successfully resisting his efforts to wrench it loose. He tried to strike her in the face with his injured hand, but gave it up with a groan of pain and tried again to wrench his arm loose.

Somehow, as she struggled on, though she could not see, Miss McClendon dimly sensed, amid the thuds of blows and the labored grunts of the struggling men, that her man was winning. And he was. He came out of the boat an instant later, dragging his opponent with him. A single blow sent the latter to the ground in a heap; then, with the quickness of chain lightning, he turned upon the other, seizing his collar from behind with a force that sent him reeling and staggering backward till he fell upon his partner. Miss McClendon's man followed like a rocket, flinging himself upon them both.

"Quick!" he gasped over his shoulder to her as he struggled with them. "I dropped my gun in the water! My car's up on the bank, just beyond that clump of willows. There's some rope on the back seat." Then, as she started, watching her over his shoulder, he remembered something and added: And there's a raincoat of mine on the front seat if you want it."

Looking down with a quick embarrassment, she remembered her unclad state and sped up the bank through the sheltering undergrowth to the car. The rope and the coat were in the car as he had said. She seized the coat and put it on hastily, grabbed the rope, and hurried back, stumbling, half falling, down the bank.

Inside of five minutes, with the girl helping, the men were securely tied and, at their captor's command, arose and climbed the bank to the car. The owner silently motioned them to the back seat;

then, still holding the door open, he asked of the girl at his side:

"You drive?"

She ran her eyes over the car with a start of surprise, nodding half unconsciously in answer to his question. And the last vestige of her earlier ideas of him vanished into thin air before the overwhelming fact of his car. Whoever he was, he was not a small-town sport, for small-town sports did not drive cars like this. It was a twin sister to her own high-priced roadster at home, in which she had broken the speed laws more times than she cared to remember.

"Then I'll ask you to drive while I watch our friends," the man was saying.

There was a flash of silken stocking in the white moonlight as she stepped into the car, and as she slid into the driver's seat she could not resist giving the steering wheel a loving little pat.

"You'll strike an old road about forty feet to the right that'll take us to the town," the man told her.

Twenty minutes later, the would-be dynamiters were safely in the hands of the village constable, and the car, with its owner at the wheel, was speeding southward in an effort to overtake a train.

"Will we catch it?" the young woman in the car asked doubtfully.

"Certainly," the man beside her answered. "It'll stop an hour at Weston, and we have a graveled road all the way."

Except for the steady rhythmic hum of the motor, the next few miles passed silently.

"Do you know, I owe you an apology, Mr.—Mr.—" she said suddenly.

He smiled, but did not supply the name.

"I've just been thinking that it's the other way round," he told her.

"I thought you were a small-town sport," she went on. "I—I apologize. You're the first real man I've met in ages."

5

"It's my turn now," he smiled, glancing round at her. "First, no one but a cad would have made you miss your train as I did. Second, I had no earthly right whatever to criticize your conduct. And third—well, I guess I've made an ass of myself all the way round tonight."

"You haven't," she answered quickly. "Everything you said was true. I deserved it—and more. And you were perfectly splendid in that fight with the dynamiters. I despise a coward. Tell me something of yourself."

"Well, I voted for Bryan once, I've fouled in football games, cut bases in baseball, been drunk, gambled, and done lots of things like those."

"But that's only one side of you—the bad side. Tell me about the real you."

He smiled and shook his head.

"It wouldn't interest you," he said.

She broke the silence again after a few moments.

"You were wrong about one thing, though—the real men who wanted to marry me," she said. "I—I waited for them and they never came. And now it's—it's too late."

"It's not too late," he argued quickly. "There'll be plenty of others, for—remember what I told you back in the boat?—you're attractive. Besides that, you're still a real girl. No one but a regular girl would have done what you did back in the boat without any false modesty about it. I know of at least one man who—who might—might apply if it were not for the prince. Why, there'll always be men and a plenty with a girl like you, for, in spite of yourself, your aunt's training, and the snobbishness that society has tried to teach you, you're still a regular girl. And you always will be. It's in your blood, because your father and mother before you were real folks."

The car rushed on, eating up the white, moonlit miles. The motor hummed with a soothing, drowsy

rhythm. For the first time in weeks, Miss McClendon began to feel sleepy. In spite of herself, her head nodded. Ten minutes more, and she was sleeping soundly, with her head on his shoulder. He took his right hand from the wheel and drove with his left only, so that the movements of his arm would not disturb her.

"Poor girl!" he muttered to himself. "She's had a bad night."

Three hours later, in the outskirts of Weston, he stopped the car and woke her. She sat up and, when she saw the position she had been in, blushed furiously. It was broad daylight, and as they drove through the city streets, the early-morning bustle was beginning. He found her train and helped her on it.

"You'll come to see me some time at Thornton?" she asked from the steps as he stood on the ground, hat in hand.

He shook his head.

"No. You see, they don't allow us much time for social pleasures."

"Then you'll write to me—often?"

"Of course—if you'll let me."

The door behind her opened, and her father, collarless and in his shirt sleeves, came out on the platform.

"Paula! What in the——" he began.

"Dad, I fell in the river at Oakville, and he pulled me out," she interrupted, nodding to the man on the ground.

"Steve Falkner!" gasped Mr. McClendon, and he crowded past his daughter to grip the other's hand.

Ten minutes afterward, as she stood on the steps and watched him drive away, there was a dreamy look in Miss McClendon's violet eyes. Her father touched her arm the second time before she turned round.

"Do you know who he is?" he asked.

"You said his name was Falkner."

"Yes; but there are lots of Falkners. He happens to be *the* Falkner. He owns that whole town of Oakville, and six or seven other sawmill towns like it. He's one of the biggest lumbermen in the South."

"Dad, do you know, he's the first real man I've met in years?" she declared. "And—and there's going to be a dickens of a row, but I'm going to chuck the prince overboard, and if he lives through this war, I'm going to marry him, instead. Meantime, I'm going to be a Red Cross nurse."



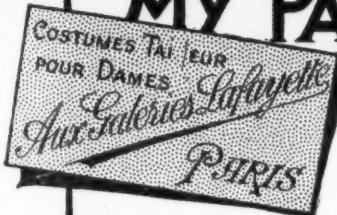
AN ARRIVAL

HEAVY droops the thick wistaria,
"Grapes" old Æsop's fox might crave;
Coral honeysuckle wanders
Round the pergola's cool cave.
Winter's fairly over now;
Not again shall twig or bough
Wear a ruff of ice or snow fur
Such as winter might endow.

Pleasant on the hills the footsteps
Of the bright ones bringing news—
Pearly mornings, clover blossomed,
Lady moths that brush the dews.
Clip the turf and trim the spray!
There's a princess on the way;
Pansy beds have donned the purple
Just to honor her. 'Tis May!

JEANNIE PENDLETON HALL.

MY PARIS LABEL



by
KATHARINE
HAVILAND
TAYLOR

Author of "Cecilia of the Pink Roses," "The Prize Story," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

**Is a Paris suit an extravagance? Read of the results
accomplished by this one small label before you decide.**

I THREW a sailor suit of 1910 on the bed. I stood looking at it, and dismally. It was to be my spring suit.

"Ah, Love, could you and I with Him conspire

To grasp this sorry Scheme of things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire?"

I quoted. I have found that there is a spot in Omar applicable to every situation.

"What?" asked Rebecca.

"Nothing, Becky," I answered. "But you'll have to make this into something like a suit. Do you think you can?"

She held it up, surveying it speculatively.

"It's a good thing your sister's fat and you're skinny," she mused. "Yes, it'll do. There's some old braid we can use on it in the blue box, too."

"And my Paris label," I said, my voice showing my cheer.

"Isn't that wore out yet?" asked Rebecca. Her eyes were distressed.

"No," I answered in a tone that allowed for no difference in opinion. "'Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire,'" I whispered. Already I wore a

Paris suit. At least the label said so, and who does not believe in signs?

Costumes Tailleur
Pour Dames
Aux Galeries Lafayette,
Paris.

I went to my room and began ripping that small label from my winter coat. I cannot pass that label without mentioning its wonderful work. It has been dry-cleaned three times and washed twice. I paid only eleven dollars for it, and got a suit thrown in.

As I said, I ripped; and as I ripped, time and space faded and again I lived its story. I shall call it:

THE LOVE STORY OF A PARIS LABEL.

It began with my painting the miniature of the Comtesse de Avagn. Sally Grant and I had a room in a house on a small street near the Sorbonne. In Akron, Ohio, which is my home, we would have called that street an alley, but Paris colors everything so differently. We thought our situation awfully romantic—at first. When we got a little hungry, it seemed cruel.

Anyway, just as we were most financially depressed, I had word that the Comtesse de Avagn had commented en-



"My poor little!" I said, in sympathetic, though bad, French. "Why thy tears?"

thusiastically on a bit of my work, which she'd seen at a student exhibition.

I will say myself that it was unusual. No one knew which side up to hang it, and while several people said that I had caught the spirit of the Seine, it wasn't the Seine at all, but a meadow near Versailles. Of course I felt proud. When I heard of the comtesse, I went running back to the Rue de le Sang and up five flights of cold stone stairs to the room in which Sally and I lived.

"Sally!" I said, flinging open the door. "I have news!"

"I wish you had a cream puff," she answered.

She was always yelling about cream puffs when we'd had nothing to eat

but fried potatoes for a week. Well, I told her, and we decided that I was to ask the comtesse if she would honor me by sitting for a miniature. I knew I wouldn't get a cent out of it, and beside that would have to prostrate myself with thanks and lie verbally and paintily about her looks. But I needed prestige, and I knew, if I painted a real, live comtesse, I could paint all the American millionaires' wives' miniatures and act peevishly about bothering with 'em, too.

"You'll have to get a new suit," said Sally. "That thing you have on looks like a sieve."

It was pretty bad.

"Where am I going to get it?" I asked with asperity.

She didn't answer, but went to the bank, which was in the usual place. I said:

"Sally, that's positively dangerous when you've old stockings on! Suppose they tore!"

"Eleven dollars," she said, without noticing me. "Eleven dollars." She looked down at the notes in her hand and then slowly and calculatingly at me. "Kid," she said, "take a chance! This stands between starvation and the little sisters of the U. S. A. Whatcha think?"

"Well," I answered, "I'm sick of fried potatoes. I'd rather die than eat any more. Let's get rich or starve romantically—not greasily."

"Um," she grunted. "You know that there won't be enough left to buy a stamp to put on that letter that goes to Uncle Henry, Akron, Ohio?"

Sally was always tragic. It wasn't half as bad as she saw it. We did owe some rent and a few bills, but, with David Harum, I have always felt that "a moderate amount of fleas is good for a dog. They keep him from broodin' too much over bein' a dog." At least I'm quite as happy, and sometimes happier, when everything is going against me.

I bought my suit at the Lafayette, which is near the Avenue de L'Opera, and I paid all of the eleven for it! The Lafayette is always full of bargains and Americans. I got the comtesse to pose for me; and in my miniature I made her nose an inch shorter than it was, which improved her greatly, and she was pleased to death. She introduced me some, and after that things just ran my way.

Sally and I got terribly gay and really had a splendid time. I can tell you, just then Akron, Ohio, looked a million miles away!

Then the war came. It does in every story, I know, but it did once. And I started for England while Sally went to the front to nurse. I shall never for-

get that trip, for it was so chaotic and weird that it seemed like a bit of another world. I can see the Gare du Nord now, full of fog and smoke, with frenzied people fighting to board trains already full.

I'd gotten a seat, for I have taken care of myself enough to know the value of a closed mouth and steady push. I settled by a French girl who was crying quietly. She was the most pathetic little person I have ever seen, for she was trying so hard not to cry. Several Americans pushed into our compartment and tried to sit on us. I am very keen for Uncle Sam, and the Stars and Stripes are tattooed on my heart, but at that moment I was not proud of my countrymen.

"Pigs!" said my little lady of sobs.

"Certainement!" I agreed.

She looked at me and knew by my French that I was an American.

"Pardon. I see you are one of them," she said.

I did hope she meant only that I was an American. I told her that there was nothing to pardon, and then, like every one else, we talked of the war. Across from us sat one of the fat-stomached rich men of my country. His eyes had half closed and his mouth was a little open. He was not a pleasant sight.

"How he must have enjoyed the arts of the Louvre!" said my little French girl.

We both giggled. Then, I suppose because laughter and tears have a heart cord stretched between them, my maiden sobbed again, and loudly.

"My poor little!" I said, in sympathetic, though bad, French. "Why thy tears?" I spoke to her as I had to those small half-alive children of my Paris-alley street, looking, through sorrow and poverty, infinitely wise for their years.

And, with a grateful look, she told me this story, told it between sobs and a catching of her breath spasmodically.

"*Mon père*," she began, "*mon père*—he greatly fears those devil Germans. He says they come to Paris. I have one cousin who lived in Belgium. She was young like me."

My maiden stopped, sobbing wildly. I laid my hand on hers. The fat-stomached American across from us opened his eyes and frowned. We had disturbed his sleep.

"She—afterward—killed herself, for they—they had made her afraid to live, afraid of day's light, wanting shadow. Mother of the Virgin," whimpered my little maiden, "where is our Christ? Has He forgotten His children?"

I could not answer, so I slipped my arm around her shaking shoulders.

"*Mon père*," she began again, "he fears greatly those Germans. He takes the all of his saving from the bank, and says to me, 'Honorée, go thou to that land of heart and great love for sorrowing littles. Go thou there and be thou safe against her tender heart.' I go," she said, "and I this morning kiss my father and say au revoir. Not can I believe that au revoir. It is good-by. He goes to war."

We were silent. Her eyes were dull with her heartbreak, and I watched the flat landscape fly past without seeing it.

"Honorée," I said, "speak you English?"

"No, only the tongue of my France. *Mon père*—*mon père* say that in that country of heart many will help a sorrowing maid."

I looked across the aisle at the fat-stomached American. His eyes were open, and the light in them was not sweet. He looked on Honorée.

"Honorée," I said, "thou wilt live with me in the great London. Thou art my small sister."

She turned and kissed me. Then she laughed through her tears.

"I am as old as thou, I doubt not," she said.

"In years," I answered, "in years."

Things went well in London. I got a small flat on a by-street off of Tottenham Court Road. It was central and near the hat shop in which Honorée's French was greatly appreciated. I had no trouble in finding her work, and oh, she was so relieved, poor baby!

"All that I make," she explained in her new English, "all that I make all days is, '*Très chic, madame! Pardon, madame, mais vous êtes très joli!*' And for that only am I paid twenty-one shilling! What a country of wealth!"

Her devotion to me was positively embarrassing. She kissed my shoulders and hands, which, inasmuch as I have a great deal of Saxon in my system, left me in a state of blushes resembling a sunset at sea. She was a wonderful little housekeeper, and keeping house—or, rather, flat—with her, I learned much.

One evening I came in late. I'd been painting a small boy, and had stayed with him for nursery tea. I came in and found Honorée weeping over my coat, which she was mending. She did so much for me. I could not stop her.

"*Maison Lafayette*," she whimpered. "There was I a clerk, and there, oh, there—" She stopped.

"Honorée," I ordered, "tell me about it immediately. Perhaps I can help."

"No," she disagreed. "No one can help. No one could but the Virgin, and she did not, although I gave her two pink candles with gold on them. Sometimes she, too, seems like a woman, with a bit of spite in her nature. Pink with gold on them!" she echoed sadly.

"Why did you give them to her?" I asked.

"My sweetheart," said Honorée, with suddenly veiled eyes, "my sweetheart." Her lips trembled, and I expected more tears and was startled when she jumped up in wild haste and screamed: "The soup! It burns, and full of new and expensive carrots!"

She ran to the soup. I waited.



I found Honorée weeping over my coat, which she was mending. "Maison Lafayette," she whimpered. "There was I a clerk, and there, oh, there—" She stopped.

"New carrots!" she said as she came toward me. "Those so expensive here!"

"Burned?" I asked.

"A bit. Its taste will be covered with salt, and then one cannot expect one soup to last always. This is that of last week's meat, you know."

"Your sweetheart?" I prompted.

"My fiancé. We quarreled. He looked at a girl of yellow hair at mass one day. I saw him. It was while the priest was calling God to come among us. I saw him! How it hurt me to see him looking about *during mass!* It was that that hurt me!"

"I imagine so," I agreed.

"And afterward I mentioned it, and he—he asked of one sleek-haired mule who clerked at the Lafayette and smiled on me. I could not help it!"

"Of course not," I agreed again.

"And he—and he— We quarreled!" she ended with another outburst of tears of ten-year-old abandon. I waited for her to calm. "He is at war," she said at last, "and I sorrow and long for him."

"And the yellow-haired?" I asked.

"Oh, she? I found after that she was married and had those many warts of largeness. It was the fault of love and jealousy. I loved too much. Could I but see him to ask pardon!"

"I'm sorry, dear, but be brave," I offered rather unoriginally.

She dried her eyes, and when I drew forth a new ribbon I had bought for her, looked much happier. Then we sat down to a little French dinner in a tiny English flat—furnishings found,

you know, with a tin bath standing up against the box that held the coals.

Lady Rackham, whose small son's miniature I was doing, had given one of her houses for hospital use. One day toward the end of my work, she came to the room where I was painting. She greeted me most kindly and told me she thought the air was keen. I agreed with her. Then she stood undecidedly, as was unusual for her.

"Miss Kirkpatrick," she said finally, "do you draw a bit in chalks? Funny little pictures, you know?"

I said I did. I'd done it many times at home, in church entertainments and so on, imitating vaudeville cartoonists.

"Jolly!" she said, with the first word of slang I'd ever heard her use. "Won't you entertain my boys at the other house? The poor chaps get frightfully down."

I said I would be charmed to do what I could. I was glad to help. All the world would help, all that they could and more, if they saw only the edges of the horrors, as I have.

So, to make it short, the next afternoon I went to the hospital house. I shall never forget it as I first saw it. It is an everlasting picture for me. The walls were those of the brocaded sort, made for a background for lovely women, but against this setting for festiveness were rows of beds, and in the center of the room boys and men propped up in chairs, all showing different stages of recovery. They were all too white and some of them seemed so young! From their dependence and shaken strength, they seemed all the more so.

I smiled at them, and they looked at me in a way that left my vision blurred for the moment. Then I put my blackboard on a chair and looked around for a place to hang my coat. At last I hung it on the foot of an iron bed, saying, as I did so, to its occupant, "May I?"

The man in the bed answered me in French.

"I read English, but not it speak," he began, and when I repeated what I'd said in French, he looked very pleased. I suppose he'd been homesick, poor chap. People aren't usually pleased by my French—that is, not if they know any!

A nurse came up and arranged two chairs for my blackboard, telling, as she did so, of a lovely amputation she'd just seen. She was as enthusiastic over it as I could possibly be over a Meissonier. How can one limit or label the arts?

Then I began. I drew a German and turned him into a dirigible. Then I had it burst—of course. I drew trenches and wove them into flags. Cannons and war scenes, good-bys, and the answering home-comings—Oh, I drew, and I drew, and I drew! I have never had such appreciation or so enjoyed it.

At last I stopped. Absolutely run out, I knew of nothing more to draw. I put away my pastels among protestations, and wrapped my board. Then I stepped toward the bed. I thought I would say a few words of French to a lonely boy, so far away from his home.

The lonely boy had his head covered with the sheet. He was sobbing. I laid my hand on his shoulder.

"Aux Galeries Lafayette," he whispered. "The label on the artist's coat!"

"Honorée—" I said.

"Yes," he answered without surprise. "I so love her! She was there a clerk, and she has gone!"

I began to laugh, to the horror of all the men who, after war, understand and pardon tears.

"No!" I said. "No! She has come, and she so loves you, also! It is truth I speak! Wait, you will see."

He kissed my hand. "I believe," he said, "I believe. And will she again love me, I shall live!"

After that I went to a wedding, and that almost ends the story of a Paris label—almost, but not quite. I went back to Uncle Henry's in Akron, Ohio. I was rather glad to get back. It was nice to see Billy. He is, of course, only a friend in a Platonic way, but I was absurdly glad to see him. He was glad to see me, too. I had a lovely time at first, for I told and retold my experiences, and put in new incidents at every telling. I love to talk about myself.

Then my sister sent me some clothes and I began to remake them. One night after I'd worked all day, I went with Billy to a picture show. After we got home he helped me out of Joyce's coat, remade for me into a 1916 model, self-starter, and he saw my Paris label.

"Paris," said Billy, in the funniest, dismal way.

"Looks like it," I said. Then I hated myself for at least not lying outright. I hate a spirit lie worse than a real one.

"Oh, thunder!" he said. "Money makes most of the misery in the world, doesn't it?"

"No," I said, "the lack of it!" I was thinking of my spring hat as I spoke. I wish they had three-franc hat stores in this country!

Then Billy began to smoke and talk



"Aux Galeries Lafayette," he whispered. "The label on the artist's coat!"

a great deal about the eyes of Theda Bara, whom we'd just seen in pictures. Of course I wasn't jealous—nothing like that—but it rather annoyed me. Then I saw my story of the Paris label on the desk.

"Billy," I said, "read that."

I knew he'd rather talk than read it, but I think sometimes he ought to pay for the privilege of taking me to the theater and picture shows and so on. And, as I said, his silly talk of Theda's eyes annoyed me, rather.

He sighed, said he'd be glad to, and settled near the reading lamp. At last he finished it and laid it aside. I mean he finished what I'd written, which was as far as my going to a wedding.

"Hum," he said.

"Think it's good?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "I like it." He always does.

"I'm awfully glad," I answered. "Don't you think some editor ought to like it, too?"

"They must be asses," said Billy. He knew of my collection of rejection slips and of my trying to write as well as paint, and called the editors asses to be tactful.

"Oh, I guess there are a few who aren't," I said, which I thought was noble of me, as they rarely appreciate my work.

"Good little story," he went on. "Pity those things never happen in real life."

"Never happen?" I repeated. "Why, William, it's all true! *Every word!*"

"Every word?" he repeated. "Why, no, Priscilla, you can't mean *that!*" I knew he was excited. I am never Priscilla unless there is a crisis of some kind.

"I do!" I said. "Why not?"

"Your sisters send you—send you—old—clothes?" he said.

"Billy," I said, "please don't be so brutal! They give me slightly worn frocks."

"I will be damned!" said Billy. His mouth was wide open, but he was handsome in spite of it. At last he spoke again: "That suit with the—ah—black stuff around the collar?"

"Braid, Billy."

"One of your sisters'?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Well, I will be damned!" he said. I should have rebuked him, but I didn't.

"You see, Billy," I explained, "my sisters send me nearly everything I wear. And they're both married to eco-

nomical husbands, so lots of times the things are rather—well, you know—gone. Of course I am grateful!" I finished hurriedly.

"And my aunt said that you were a dear girl, but spent too much money on your clothes. You have the reputation of being the best-dressed—" He trailed off into nothing, still staring at me, open-mouthed.

"That Paris label?" he questioned, as if he were in a trance.

"Oh, that?" I said. "I put it in for the assurance that it gives me. I feel very well dressed when I realize that I once had a suit that cost all of eleven dollars. Then you know," I went on candidly, "lots of people believe in signs. I don't believe in destroying myths. The world needs romance."

But Billy wasn't listening.

He had got up and was standing near me. His face was white.

"Patsy—" he said. Recalling it, I don't know how he put so many shakes into that short word; I felt shaky, too! "Patsy—" he said again. Then he drew a long breath and fairly blurted out the rest. "I love you fiendishly," he said. "Can't sleep and all that kind of stuff. Just dippy about you." He stopped and moved nearer me. "I was afraid to ask you," he went on, "because I thought you cared for pretty clothes. I thought I oughtn't to ask you to give them up! Oh, Patsy!"

He reached toward me and then straightened and put his hands in his pockets.

"Well, go on!" I said, and I'm afraid pretty snappily.

He went on.

So did I.

"Oh, Patsy," he whispered huskily, "you are so sweet! I—I wish I could give you everything!"

"You are," I said. "You're giving me more than everything, and, Billy, with dry cleaning, that label will last three more years!"

The Descendant

By Theodosia Garrison

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

**The delightful tale of young Dorothea, who yearned ardently
to be the descendant of a hero. A Memorial Day story.**

Under the sod and the dew, waiting the
judgment day—
Under the roses, the Blue; under the lilies,
the Gray.

THE charming young teacher upon whom it had fallen to read these immortal lines to the junior class in history had for the most part a bored and inattentive audience. It had listened to a colorless and neutral survey of the Civil War that appealed to the various intelligences as a summary of the War of the Roses might have done, the main fact deduced from the afternoon's patriotic exercises being that, in consequence of much unpleasantness, the thirtieth of May was a holiday and, therefore, the late misunderstanding between the North and South had not been in vain.

With one exception, the junior history class looked at the clock above the reader's head and endured. The exception sat on the edge of her chair with her hands gripped tightly about her knee and her round eyes fixed with an unwinking blue stare on the book in Miss Walter's hand. For from that alone had emerged the spark that had kindled her into flame. Up to this moment, Dorothea had given the history of her country only the attention that would serve to pull her through the daily lesson. The Declaration of Independence read by Thomas Jefferson himself would have left her cold, for the all-sufficient reason that the gentle-

man had sought to express himself in prose rather than in verse. For to verse alone Dorothea was as a sapling in the wind and as driftwood to the wave. Verse was the flame that scorched, the blade that pierced the armor she wore against facts, dates, and figures.

The wonderful words coming glibly from Miss Walter's lips suddenly enveloped that rather uninteresting holiday known as "Decoration Day" in a cloud of rosy glory. Dorothea was no longer in the classroom; she was walking in a cemetery. A light rain was falling; it drifted from the cypresses and weeping willows and slanted against the white headstones and marble crosses. She walked with a procession of beautiful, white-faced women in black. All were young, heartbroken, and courageous, and each one carried an armful of roses and lilies. She was carrying roses and lilies; she was more heartbroken and more courageous than any of them. There was a suggestion of flags in the air. Somewhere, far in the distance, a battle was raging. Here and there the beautiful, black-robed women were pausing. They were placing great handfuls of roses and lilies on pathetic mounds. She was assisting them.

A grip on her shoulder jarred her from this exquisite, torturing occupation back to the classroom and the sight of Jennie Clark's puzzled face appealing at her side.

"What in the world are you staring

at, Dorothea?" her friend demanded. "Everybody's gone home and I came back to see what you were doing. Come on. Don't you remember that we are going to Cousin Jasper's this afternoon?"

Great is the deception of the artist who imagines the shock that uplifted wings might be to the person accustomed to navigate only on legs and feet. No necromancer could bolt a handkerchief with greater rapidity than Dorothea could fold those pinions of fancy that too often wafted her into the rarefied height where her best friends were unable to follow. Not that she missed them there; vague and beautiful beings accompanied Dorothea on the wing. Only on the earth plane, as it were, did she demand normal companionship.

At present Dorothea and Jennie were close and confidential friends. They shared the same desk at school and the same neighborhood after school. Jennie did Dorothea's examples and made her doll's clothes on the rare occasions when brief maternal instinct, usually on a wet Saturday, arose in Dorothea's breast. Jennie admitted Dorothea's ability to write a composition for a friend at the last permissible minute, and to give so-called "imitations" of youth's natural enemies, such as teachers, unpopular relatives, and leaders of one's Bible class; also the physical skill demonstrated in vaulting, running, and jumping from vast heights. Then, too, Jennie, being well aware of the fact that she was older, prettier, and far more amiable than the sturdy and occasionally pugnacious Dorothea, found her friend's companionship, comparatively speaking, becoming.

To Dorothea, Jennie's charm could be summed up in one comprehensive sentence—she was a perfect follower. Lacking a good sport for a mate, this lamblike quality was not to be despised. As Dorothea suggested—so Jennie did. Leading her own blameless life, she had

never voluntarily climbed a fence, become a pirate or an actress, or defied authority. Under Dorothea's impassioned direction, she gave a satisfactory, if not brilliant, demonstration in the line desired.

Dorothea now, looking at the puzzled, pretty face, assigned her instantly to a new rôle—second in the lead, in fact, in the drama that her subconscious mind had composed and approved even during her brief visit to the rainy cemetery. Briefly, Jennie was to become a mourner. The stage, as it were, was already set: Decoration Day. The usual parade from the courthouse to the cemetery—at least she supposed it was the cemetery, no evidence being offered to the contrary—with Jennie and herself, two white-faced, black-garbed, beautiful women, their arms filled with roses and lilies, following on to add their tender tribute to the fallen.

Here came the first hitch in the proceedings. The fallen *whom?* Dorothea realized abruptly that her knowledge of her forbears was, to say the least, limited. She turned to Jennie, thrusting the subject of Cousin Jasper into the background.

"Did you have any relations in the Civil War?" she demanded.

"I don't know. I suppose so. Everybody did," said Jennie vaguely. "Here's your hat, Dorothea. Please come on. You know Jasper said he would let us make chocolate if we got there early."

"I've got to go home first," said Dorothea firmly. "I tell you—you go on to Jasper's and get the things ready, and I'll come as soon as I can."

She left the protesting Jennie on the corner and, propelled by her great idea as by a motor, came hurtling into her mother's drawing-room, to the immediate destruction of a pleasing conversation between that lady and a casual caller. The latter Dorothea ignored.

"Mother," she exploded, "did we have any relations in the Civil War?"



They were placing great handfuls of roses and lilies on pathetic mounds. *She* was assisting them.

Her mother's placidity, inured by long experience, remained unruffled.

"Speak to Mrs. Parker, Dorothea," she said.

"How do you do—— Did we?" said Dorothea in one breath.

"What an absurd question, Dorothea! I dare say. Let me see. There was your grandfather's youngest brother Malachi. He was, I know, and my Cousin Walter."

Joy rose in Dorothea's heart.

"Where are they buried?" she demanded hopefully. The visitor stared, and her mother, blushing for her offspring, became a trifle curt. "As a mat-

ter of fact, they are not buried anywhere. Uncle Malachi lives with his daughter in Ohio, and Cousin Walter is at the soldiers' home in Norfolk. Go upstairs to Mary, Dorothea, and have her brush your hair. I thought you were going to Jasper's this afternoon."

The delicate suggestion fell on dead ears. Only after a probing research in family history had failed to bring to light a more heroic figure than the disappointing Malachi or Walter did the disgusted descendant take her leave.

Even in Jasper's delightful library, soothed with chocolate and stayed with cinnamon buns, the thought of her in-

glorious ancestry persisted. Apparently her only hope lay in the fact that Jennie's family had not been so unspeakably commonplace as her own. They *couldn't* have been! Cheered by this, she allowed her drooping spirits to soar to the heights that Jasper's parties required.

She liked Jasper. He was twenty-four, tall, and angular. He shed an aroma of kindness and mirth, and his knowledge of the prevailing comic songs and slang of the day was inexhaustible. He was engaged in some vague business known as "insurance" that apparently could be quitted at any moment for the entertainment of his friends, and his charm was enhanced by the fact that he lived in a sedate old mansion with an invalid grandmother who never emerged from her own apartments to cast gloom upon the proceedings. Also, the housekeeper was an adept in the making of delectable buns and cakes.

Cousin Jasper regarded Jennie in the light of a pretty little sister. Her bosom friend he rejoiced in as a monkey with fantastic tricks. To-day, after watching his guests' whole-souled consumption of his hospitality, he was pleased to be highly amused by Dorothea's imitation of nearsighted Miss Spencer reciting—at a recent church sociable—"Hold the Lantern up Higher and Tremble Not So."

Intoxicated by his approval and Jennie's flattering "Oh, Dorothea, aren't you terrible?" the artist went a bit too far. Spying upon Jasper's desk the portrait of an extremely pretty young lady smiling from her silver frame, she chose to comment upon the supposed relation between her host and the original.

"Jasper's in love and I don't care,
And I know what will please him.
A bottle of wine to make him shine
And Miss What's-her-name in the frame to
tease him,"
chanted the daring performer.

This time Jasper was not amused. He went so far as to place the portrait in the desk drawer and, although his kindly smile never wavered, his "Cut it out, kid," was emphatic. Dorothea cut it out.

After all, these afternoon frivolities were as froth upon the wave of the dramatic possibilities of the morrow. A realization that her plans were not perfected caused Dorothea to break up the party at an unusually early hour. Directly the street was gained, she took the fascinated, if not wholly approving, follower into her confidence. She was fluent, persuasive, and dramatic; also so rapid in her demonstration of these qualities that Jennie might have been pardoned for emerging from the orator's eloquence with the following ideas: On the morrow she was to march in a parade—objection offered and jeered at that she was recovering from a sprained ankle; she was to become tall and beautiful, apparently overnight; to carry an armful of roses and lilies and wear a black veil—objection that she had no black veil squashed by Dorothea's offer to produce two at any given moment. She had no means of procuring roses and lilies to carry in her arms; Dorothea would inveigle a quarter from her grandfather, an operation which long practice had perfected. She was to go at once to her mother and produce a hero conveniently interred in the town cemetery.

Immediately acted upon, this last suggestion resulted in failure, for Jennie returned to the expectant Dorothea with dismal tidings. Apparently her family had not existed before or during the war; there was not even a Malachi or a Walter in its drab background. Her people might have belonged to a nation without history as far as the family supply of heroes went. She waxed apologetic at Dorothea's scorn and offered a tentative suggestion.

"Wouldn't Great-uncle William do?

You know he lived with us and I went to his funeral. Wouldn't he do?"

Dorothea considered darkly. Great-uncle William she recalled as no figure of romance, but a gentleman of great age swathed in coats and mufflers and propelled in a wheel chair on the sunny side of the street like a huge baby. However, there seemed no choice. She reluctantly accepted Great-uncle William. Her battered spirits rose.

"We'll pretend," she said. "Perhaps he was a soldier and didn't say anything about it. Let's play that he was about as old as Jasper and had blue eyes and a black mustache and we were crazy about him. That's fine, Jennie! We will decorate Uncle William!"

Immediately before her eyes as she spoke rose the splendid, stalwart young figure of a soldier in a blue uniform. He wore a cocked hat, a sword clanked at his side. She adored him, and her heart was broken. At least, it would be to-morrow. She instructed the flattered follower as to the proposed program. Dorothea, bearing the black veils and having purchased the necessary decorative blooms, would await Jennie at the courthouse, the starting point of the parade. She would also, competently, see to the rest of the details of the pageant and the staging, as it were, of the appropriate emotions.

Dorothea was awakened in the morning by the beat of rain against her windows. She looked out at the dripping trees shivering in an east wind and pavements slick with wet. Nature, it seemed, had rather overdone her part in living up to requirements. However, this was the merest trifle. In Dorothea's bureau at the moment reposed the two black veils that she had thoughtfully abstracted from her mother's room the night before. They were not, perhaps, all that they should be to convey the impression of bereavement, being rakishly decorated with dots and deigned to end coquettishly

beneath the nose. To the true artist the letter is nothing, the symbol everything. A propitious deity apparently presided over Dorothea's morning. At breakfast she was informed that her mother had a sick headache and that disaster would fall upon whosoever disturbed her. Dorothea was not an unnatural daughter. She reflected only that if her mother was ever compelled to have a headache, she could not have selected a better time.

The operation of extracting a quarter from an old gentleman absorbed in the morning paper and willing to pay any price for peace was too easy to pride oneself upon. It was even suggested to her that she spend the day with Jennie. The only obstacle that marred her perfect get-away was the fact that Mary insisted upon her wearing her raincoat and rubbers and donning a disreputable object known as "Dorothea's rain hat." Having long since decided that her best was none too good to grace the day, Dorothea protested.

"You'll wear these or you won't go," said old Mary. "I know you children —you'll be gadding out whenever the notion takes you, and then it's wet feet and sore throats. You do as I say!"

Dorothea succumbed and departed. Once away from tyranny, she splashed blithely to the florist's some four blocks away. There the first blow fell. It appeared that Mr. Mark's stock ran mainly to potted things and what are known as "set pieces." Roses and lilies, it seemed, were not to be handed by the armful to the proud possessor of a quarter, even if one's shop bloomed with them. Argument being of no avail and time speeding, the roses and lilies finally dwindled to the form of a stiff yellow flower set in a red pot. It was a disappointing compromise, seeing that this suggested pertness rather than grief and refused to be carried gracefully. It also cost the appalling price of twenty



"Where is the parade?" she challenged.

cents. Neither, by any stretch of the imagination, could it be converted into two armfuls, and Dorothea's eyes, casting about in despair for a second blossom of any description, fell with relief upon a huddle of small pots each bearing a flowerless green plant of a nondescript sort and charmingly labeled: "Five Cents Each." With one of these and the stiff flower she departed in haste, joy in her heart and utterly oblivious of the rain that whipped against her shoulders.

It was upon gaining her first view of the trysting place that the propitious diety of circumstance made his abrupt exit. True, a limp flag hung dejectedly above the door, but where was the pa-

rade, where were the militia, the dashing horsemen with banners, the red-shirted firemen, the open carriages filled with proud old veterans and their prouder relatives? As against this expected glory a single figure appeared from the shelter of the great door and greeted her with the asperity granted to one whose feet are damp and whose erstwhile crisp curls hang in lank strings.

"I've been waiting for you for hours, Dorothea!" wailed the exasperated Jennie. "And I oughtn't to have come at all, and I'm going home this minute! It isn't a bit like you said it would be!"

Dorothea ignored her. She appealed, instead, to a total stranger who appeared from the hallway and whose duty it was to guard the doors of justice.

"Where is the parade?" she challenged.

"The parade?" he echoed. "Oh, the mayor called that off early when he see the kind of a day it was going to be. None of the boys was anxious to turn out in weather like this and 'twarn't fit for them old grandpops to walk or ride." He surveyed Dorothea with a paternal eye that comprehended the flowerpots in her arms and embraced the dejected Jennie in the rear. "Pshaw!" he said kindly. "You was planning to go along, I guess. No, there won't be no decoratin' to-day."

He glanced judicially at the weather, shook his head, and disappeared in the hall.

"There, you see, Dorothea!" exulted Jennie. "There isn't *anything*, and you haven't got any roses and lilies at all—just those old things in pots—and you said that everybody would be looking at us and the men would take off their hats and ladies would cry. You did! And there isn't *anything*!" She weakened at the sight of Dorothea's unmoved face. "Come on, Dorothea!" she pleaded. "Let's go home and play in the attic."

For answer, Dorothea placed the flowerpots at her feet and, extracting a crumpled veil from her pocket, proceeded to fasten it firmly over her forlorn hat and as much of her countenance as it would cover.

"I brought one for you, too," she said, "but if you're going to back out and go home just because it's raining, you can. I should think you'd be ashamed and I should think all those men that ought to have gone out to-day and decorated their relations would be ashamed, too. I don't care what the mayor says, *I'm* going."

To every great leader there comes a time when he knows the bitterness of standing alone. This was Dorothea's moment. The erstwhile perfect follower for the first time asserted a will of her own.

"Anyhow," she retorted, "I don't see what you are making all this fuss about. After all, it's *my* Great-uncle William and not yours, and he wasn't a soldier at all. I asked mother. He wasn't in the war. He didn't have to be. She said he had a substitute." From Jennie's tone it was plain that she considered this fact one that shed a golden light on the family escutcheon and was to be regarded with pride.

Dorothea rose to the occasion. She turned from the door and, regarding Jennie with as much scorn as her ex-

pression could convey beneath the spotted mask, shot her bolt.

"I knew it all the time," she said. "You didn't think I was taking all this trouble about your old uncle, did you? I'm going to decorate the substitute. I wouldn't let you come with me if you wanted to."

Holding herself with almost military erectness, she walked down the courthouse steps, a red flowerpot in the curve of each arm, and struck out gallantly in the direction of the cemetery.

One might have said that her wings had been waiting for her in the entry after the fashion of dripping and checked umbrellas, so promptly did they attach themselves to her shoulders.

A few moments later one might have observed upon the deserted main street the figure of a beautiful, black-veiled woman, her arms full of roses and lilies, moving gracefully through the crowd of awed spectators who parted to let her pass. In other words, Dorothea was enjoying herself. In her inmost heart, she was aware of relief in casting off forever the lumpish form of Great-uncle William and accepting in his place, without effort, the gallant young officer of her dreams. She could really think of this splendid being as "Billy" without the slightest twitch of the humorous vein that occurred when one applied the cognomen to the gentleman of the wheel chair.

From this point Dorothea may be said to have been walking in her sleep, conducted only by a blissful dream instead of a normal sense of direction. With the artist's infinite painstaking capacity, she built up her pathetic romance. From the first meeting with her hero—in a moonlit garden, while in the great house beyond music played and dancers whirled—up to the moment of the heartbreaking leave-taking—in a drawing-room full of gold furniture and priceless ornaments, while outside the house, so lately the scene of revelry,

his regiment waited while its young commander took a lingering farewell of his beloved. She gave him her portrait, the portrait that was afterward to be returned to her under such distressing circumstances.

"Come into the garden for the last time, belovéd," he murmured. Dorothea promptly turned into the garden—a fact that led her from the main street and headed her in an entirely new direction.

She was unaware that the rain had long since ceased and that her heavy coat had become a burden. It was only the intrusion of a sharp, purely physical pain that presently brought her abruptly from her spiritual agonies. Instinctively she put down the flowerpots that were torturing her bent arms and for the first time became aware of her surroundings. She was not on Main Street. The cemetery was nowhere in sight. She appeared to be on a country road. A little distance away, a row of frame houses which she recognized as "flats" showed her that she had reached the city line.

Jarred into a sudden sense of her whereabouts, she stared about her, and in that glance came the glorious reward of work well done, the high approval of her spirit's guides. *She was standing almost directly opposite a tombstone.* Miraculously led, her feet had been halted at the very resting place of the substitute. There was no doubt whatever as to its genuineness. The stone was set some little distance back from the road. It was brown and beaten by wind and weather. It slanted tipsily to one side. The lettering on its surface was indistinguishable, but reverent eyes could faintly discern, among the battered hieroglyphics, the number 12. Transposed, the figures made the perfect age for Billy the belovéd.

Thrilled and excited, the radiant mourner instantly assumed her charac-

ter. With tender hands she placed the flowerpots in the mud on either side of the sagging stone and, seating herself beside it in an attitude of utter dejection, after a moment's earnest effort burst into appropriate tears.

However, she was not allowed to revel in misery. A kindly hand touched her bowed head, and an unfamiliar, anxious voice asked: "Little girl, what is it? Have you hurt yourself?"

A capable grasp was assisting her to her feet. The blinking Dorothea realized that a stout lady with a kind face and compassionate blue eyes was regarding her intently.

"When I looked from the window now," the intruder continued, "and saw you here, I said to my Otto, 'A child has fallen down by the old milestone and hurt herself,' and I ran out. You are not hurt—no?"

"The old what?" said Dorothea.

"The old milestone here," said the shatterer of dreams. "Twelve miles to Springfield, it says, for more than a hundred years already."

Having regarded Dorothea steadily and being apparently assured as to the absence of accident, she became inquisitive.

"And why do you cry so beside it, little one?"

"I thought it was a grave," said Dorothea blankly.

"Ach so," said Mrs. Schwartz, a new pity appearing in her voice. "But why, my child, do you put on it a tomato vine?"

Dorothea's eyes followed her inquisitor's to the sickly green plant. She made her last stand against an unimaginative world.

"He—he liked tomatoes," she said.

Poor Dorothea! Divested of her robes of romance, despoiled of wings, an acute perception of her condition affronted her. Against disbelief, scorn, or argument she could be adamant. Against the possibilities of ridicule she

became a shivering coward. And she had been ridiculous! Summed up, her glorious idea had culminated in a weary walk to the end that she might put a tomato plant on a milestone. For the first time she dissolved into genuine grief.

"Come," said Mrs. Schwartz. She led the stumbling Dorothea in the direction of the flats, soothing her as she went. "When a little one is tired and maybe lost and hungry, a good lunch and a little sleep sets all right. See, you shall come with Auntie Schwartz and have these things, and afterward you shall tell us where you live and poppa shall take you there."

Dorothea, proceeding in desperate, tearful silence, would have been instantly comforted by the fact that Mrs. Schwartz's compassionate mind had firmly placed her in the position of an ill-used, slightly demented child, probably beaten by a stepfather, lost in the rain on her way to the cemetery. Indeed, the new-found aunt intimated as much in an unknown tongue to the blond gentleman in a plaid house coat who greeted them as they entered. At another time it would have been delightful to find oneself in that strange dwelling known as a "flat"—to realize that all the rooms were on the ground floor, even the bedroom, where Dorothea was



She made her last stand against an unimaginative world. "He—he liked tomatoes," she said.

directly led. Under the present circumstances the cheerful, overdecorated room suggested only a trap.

True to her resolution, Dorothea's hostess asked no more questions. Instead, she busied herself with the removal of her guest's shoes and stockings. The trusty raincoat and hat were placed near a shining radiator, and Dorothea, still mute and occasionally gulping, was enveloped in a capacious flowered dressing gown. Followed a glass of hot milk and a wonderful sand-

wich of rye bread and grape jelly and, immediately after, the descent into a high white puff that yielded deliciously to one's body and proved to be Mrs. Schwartz's own bed. In this, much resembling an unfledged robin in a large nest, Dorothea reposed silently while Mrs. Schwartz covered her with a wonderfully crocheted and tasseled coverlet, crooning maternally above her the while.

"So I have done often for my Minna, when she was no bigger than you and comes in tired from her play. But my Minna, she iss a big girl now, and mamma has hooking up of dresses for balls, instead. You shall see my Minna when she comes back to-day from the movies with her young man. A grand young man! But too soon he iss taking Minna away from poppa and mamma. Ach, yes! See." She designated a large crayon portrait over the mantel. "There iss my Minna when she iss a little girl like you."

Dorothea looked at a child's round, amiable face flanked by two thick pigtails. Something strangely familiar in the expression teased her for a moment and as quickly passed. Still wordless, she bestowed the tribute of a pathetic smile upon her departing hostess and for that lady's benefit instantly relapsed into a profound sleep.

This, be it said, was pure deception; a trapped animal, a newly caged bird has no more inclination to rest than Dorothea. Specters of ridicule and derision leered at her between the bedposts. *Nobody* would understand; *nobody* would be sorry. She saw herself led home by the blond poppa and immediately exposed to a humiliated and exasperated family. This heavenly kind Mrs. Schwartz—what would *she* think? Vain explanations, vague excuses blurred in her brain, and in the midst of them the unaccountable happened. Even as with criminals who are reported to have slept sweetly preceding

execution, so did nature have its way with Dorothea. Cuddled in down, unaware of having relaxed her hold on consciousness, she slept like a baby.

A door banged. There was instant confusion, laughter, a girl's happy note and a man's deep voice—all hushed immediately by a sound as of escaping steam, apparently from the lips of her hostess. Followed silence. It was plain to the awakened and desperate captive that her sad story was in process of relation to Minna and the grand young man.

Planless, helpless, she quivered beneath the red-and-white bars of the coverlet and a moment later sat bolt upright, incredulous, unbelieving, but with a faint, first hope at her heart. A familiar voice was speaking in an undertone, a man's voice that held both compassion and interest.

"Poor kid," it said, "suppose I go in and take a look at her before she wakes up. There's just a chance she may come from my part of town."

The door opened noiselessly and closed again. A hungry robin stretching from its nest could experience no more satisfaction at receiving its food than did Dorothea in realizing that her ears had not failed her. The "grand young man" was in the room. He was Jasper!

To be Jasper meant more than the mere name implied. It meant loyalty that demands no explanation, kindness and amusement, and an instant understanding of immediate circumstances. Dorothea's face expressed only the passionate desire for escape. He stared, surprise and mirth registered on his countenance, and then, without a word, he comprehended.

"I'm on," his noiseless lips said.

He shot a glance at the open window and imitated in expressive pantomime a drop to the ground and a leap over a fence. In an instant he had placed a coin on the nearest chair.

"Trolley," he said in the same manner, holding up two fingers and pointing straight ahead. He regained the door in a step and turned at its opening with the final instruction on his lips, "Beat it!"

Even as Dorothea fastened the top button of each shoe with frenzied fingers and slipped the raincoat over an unhooked dress, she heard his voice again.

"Nobody I know," said this admirable liar. "No, I wouldn't wake her yet. Come on, ma and pa. Get out the table, and Minna and I will show you something about pinochle, eh, Minna?"

Before any table could have been produced by lesser means than sleight of hand, Dorothea had followed instructions to the latter. She had dropped from the low window and had taken the back fence like a cat. She scurried ahead with her coat flapping at her heels, the hat with its twisted veil in her hand, and the joy of one redeemed in her heart, hearing, as she neared the corner, the clang of the approaching trolley.

Busily engaged in hooking the available portions of her dress, she did not look up as the car passed the cemetery. That part of Dorothea's being which at this hour yesterday had yearned so ardently to be the descendant of a hero,

the mourner of a substitute, had ceased to be.

Jennie, seated on the top step of her porch, listlessly playing jackstones, noted Dorothea's approach with some apprehension and was charmed when her friend greeted her with civility. Apparently Dorothea was willing to lose sight of the fact that they had parted in anger. It was also evident, from her placid expression, that she had carried out her plans and had consequently arrived at the end of a perfect day. Jennie diplomatically refrained from questions that might tend to renew hostilities and proffered the jackstones.

"I'm up to two games threesies. You catch up to me, Dorothea. Do you know," she continued amiably, "I was thinking that when we go to Jasper's, we'll get him to toast marshmallows."

"Oh, I don't know," said Dorothea. She threw out the jackstones and caught them again with a practiced hand. "I don't believe we're going over to Jasper's as much as we did."

"Why, Dorothea," cried the surprised Jennie, "what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing," said Dorothea nonchalantly. "It's just an idea, of course, but I shouldn't wonder if Jasper was going to get married."



THE SEASON

THE little fluttery, vibrant wings;
The stir of blood in springtime things;
The joy of a child with a new blue sash;
The merry light of a sunbeam's flash
On a kitten at play
In open doorway;
A little tremulous trickle of song,
In the throat of a bird;
A maiden's heart by its first kiss stirred;
A song of May!

STELLA SAXTON.

The King of Maleku

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "In His Place," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

Feminism in the Southern Seas.

CONNART had started in life with a fine, open, believing disposition, and with that disposition for his chief asset, he had entered the world of business. At thirty he had lost nearly everything but his heart. Then that was stolen from him, also, by one Mary Bateman, of Boston, a quiet-looking little woman endowed with common sense, a few thousand dollars, and a taste for travel. It was this taste, combined with a slight weakness of the lungs, that induced Connart to go into the Pacific trade; also a legacy, from an English relation, amounting to some two thousand pounds odd, which enabled him to make the new start in business without calling on his wife's capital.

Dobree, of San Francisco, gave him the pitch. Connart had the qualities of his defects. Men robbed him, but they liked him. Men are queer things. Dobree, in business, was a very tough person indeed, quite without any finer feelings and never giving a cent or a chance away, yet, taking a liking to Connart, he gave him for nothing a house, a godown, and the chance of success on this island, by the name of Maleku.

"I had a station there up to six months ago," said Dobree, "but I'm getting rid of my copra interests. You can have the house, charter a schooner, fill up with trade, and go down there. It's a good climate and will suit your wife. You won't make a fortune, but

you won't do badly if you stick to your guns and don't let the Kanakas get the weather gauge on you. There's only one man there. Seedbaum is his name. He's a tough customer, by all accounts, but there's copra enough for two. I know a schooner you can have—the *Golden Light*. She's owned by old Tom Bowlby. I've got a fellow at a station on Tomasu. That's a hundred and fifty miles west of Maleku. There's a cargo waiting shipment there. Bowlby can drop you and your stuff at Maleku; then pick up my cargo at the other place. You won't have your copra ready for some months, and you can make arrangements with him to come back for it. You might make arrangements to work in future with Bowlby. He's a straight man. You might work with him as a partner."

It was easy to be seen that Dobree was not only giving things away, but going out of his course to make things smooth. Connart felt glowingly thankful.

"It's more than good of you," said he, "but it seems to me you will lose over this, for a location like that is worth money."

"So are cigars," said Dobree, "but if I give a box of cigars to a friend, he doesn't complain that the gift is worth money. D——n money!" continued this money grubber. "It's worth nothing but the fun of making it. Well, will you take your cigars or shall I give the box to some one else?"

Connart said no more. In three weeks' time, the *Golden Light*, which was lying at the wharves, had taken her cargo of all the multitudinous things that go by the name of "trade," and one bright morning, tacking against the wind from the sea, she left the Golden Gate behind her.

Mrs. Connart stood on deck, watching bald Tamalpais across the blue, scudding sea of the wake. When you go to the Pacific Islands, you die to all the things you have known, but you are at least sure that you are going to heaven—if you avoid the low islands.

Mrs. Connart knew the first fact. Down below in her cabin, she carried with her the relics of the life she would no longer lead, down to a well-worn riding habit and a whip that would most likely never touch horse again. But she was not despondent; quite the reverse.

You may be seasick in a Pacific schooner bucking against the swell and bending to the northwest trades, you may be mutinous or angry or tipsy; but despondency, that low fever of cities and civilization, has no place out there.

"You ain't feelin' the sea, ma'am," said Captain Bowlby, ranging up along-side of her.

"No," said she, "I'm a good sailor." "I bet you are!" said the captain.

Bowlby had a keen eye for ships and women. He had taken a liking to Mrs. Connart at first sight. She had a steady eye and a sure smile that pleased him, and some days later, alone with Ambrose the mate, he voiced his opinions.

"Looks like a mouse, don't she? Well, there ain't no mouse about her, barring the look. She's one of them quiet sorts that'd back chat a congressman if she was put to it, or take a lion by the tail if it was makin' for one of her kids. I bet she's rudder and compass both to Connart. She and he fit as if they was welded. Did you ever take notice that there's chaps you meet

that're only half men till they get a woman that fits them clapped on to them? If she don't fit, they go under the first beam sea they meet; if she do, weather won't hurt them."

Ambrose concurred. He was a concurring individual, with few opinions on any matters outside his trade.

"I reckon you're right," said he, "though I don't know much about women. I never had the time," he finished apologetically.

II.

They raised Maleku at six o'clock one brilliant morning, and by nine it had developed before them, mountainous and green, showing, through the glasses, the blowing foliage, torrent traces, and the foam on the barrier reef.

To Connart and his wife, there seemed something miraculous in the unfolding of this island from the wastes of the blue and desolate sea. They had pictured this new home often in their minds, but they had pictured nothing like this. It had been waiting for them all their lives, and it seemed to them now that the souls of all the pleasant places they had ever seen or dreamed of were waiting to greet them on that summer-girdled reef.

As they passed the break and entered the lagoon, the true island beach of blinding white sand showed its curve, lipped by the emerald waters, and through the foliage came glimpses of the white houses of the little town.

"Look!" said Mrs. Connart, wide-eyed and drawing deep breaths as if to inhale the strangeness and beauty of the scene before her. "There are people on the beach—natives. And look at the canoes!"

"There's a boat pushing off," said Connart, "and a big fellow in a striped suit in her."

"That's Seedbaum," said Captain Bowlby. "Wonder what he wants—gin, likely."

The anchor fell, wakening the echoes of the woods, and the *Golden Light*, swinging to the tide that was just beginning to steal out of the lagoon, lay with her nose pointing to the beach, while the boat came alongside and the man in the striped suit scrambled on board.

He was a big man with bulging eyes, a shaved head, and feet incased in worn-out tennis shoes. The suit seemed made of flannelette.

Mrs. Connart, at first sight, took a profound dislike to this individual.

Seedbaum—for Seedbaum it was—saluted Bowlby, gave him a good day, cast his eye at the strangers, and opened up.

"I knew you before you made the anchorage," said he. "Dropped in for water, I suppose."

"No, I've water enough till I fetch Tomasu," replied Bowlby. "I've brought some trade."

"Trade?" said Seedbaum, offering a cigar. "Well, I don't mind taking some prints and knives off you at a reasonable price. I'm full up with canned goods and tobacco. Still—at a reasonable figure—"

"The trade's not mine," said Bowlby, lighting the cigar. "It belongs to the new trader—that gentleman there. Mr. Connart's his name. Let me make you known. Mr. Connart, this is Mr. Seedbaum."

"Glad to make your acquaintance," said Connart.

Seedbaum, fingering an unlit cigar, stared at Connart.

"Well, this gets me," said he. "Why, Dobree cleared his last man out for good. There's not business enough in this island for two—that's flat. What's he want to send you for?"

"He didn't send me," replied Connart.

"Then," said Seedbaum, "what brought you here, anyway?"

"I think," said Mrs. Connart, "this

ship brought us here. And—excuse me—do you own this island?"

Seedbaum stared at her; then his glance fell before that quiet, unwavering gaze, and he turned to Bowlby.

"Well," said he, "it's none of my affair if the whole continent of the States comes here to find copra—if it's to be found. But it seems to me this is a pretty dry ship."

"Come down below," said Bowlby.

They went below, and the pop of a beer-bottle cork followed upon their descent.

"Oh, what a creature!" said Mrs. Connart. "George, why is it that humanity alone produces things like that?"



"I think," said Mrs. Connart, "this ship brought us here. And—excuse me—do you own this island?"

"I don't know," said Connart. "But I wish humanity had not produced it here."



Seedbaum stared at her; then his glance fell before that quiet, unwavering gaze, and he turned to Bowlby.

Bowlby, leaning on the rail, spat into the water and spoke.

"I didn't much trouble tellin' you of that chap on the way out," said Bowlby. "There's no use in meetin' troubles half-way, and there's not an island in the hull Pacific you won't find trouble of some sort in. If you go in for Pacific tradin', there's two things you have to face—cockroaches and men. I've kept the old *Light* pretty free of roaches by fumigatin', but you can't fumigate islands. If you could, I reckon you'd see more rats with hands and feet takin' to the water than's ever been seen since the Ark discharged cargo. Seedbaum'd be one of them. But you have his measure now, and you'll know enough to go careful with him. Wiart, the last man that was here, got on all right with him. You see, they were pretty much of a pair, and it's my belief they were hand in glove, as you might say. But I reckon you won't have much use for a glove like that. Well, I'll get you ashore now to see your house, and I'll help to fix it up for you. We'll begin gettin' the cargo ashore to-morrow."

He ordered a boat to be lowered, and they rowed ashore.

Never, not even in dreamland, had Mrs. Connart experienced anything so strange as that stepping on shore from the bow of the boat run high and dry on the shelving beach, never anything like the touch of land after the long, long weeks of seafaring, and the sights, the sounds, the perfumes all new, belonging to a new life to be lived in a new world.

The white house set in a little garden at the far end

of the village pleased her as much as the place. Her house is almost as much as her husband to a woman, for, to a woman, a house implies so much more than to a man. There are good houses and bad houses, crazy houses exhibiting the folly of their builders in stucco turrets or mad chimney pots, and stupid houses without character or proper sculleries and sinks. The house at Maleku, though small and possessing few rooms, was cheerful and had a pleasant personality of its own, but it did not possess a stick of furniture. Mrs. Connart, with the prescience of a woman and assisted by the advice of Bowlby, had brought with them from San Francisco articles of furniture not to be obtained in the islands unless at a ruinous cost. Mats, cane chairs, and hammocks could be obtained from the natives. All the same, there had been furniture in the house, and it was gone. Dobree had given them a list of things, and among them was an article on which Mrs. Connart had, womanlike, set her heart. "One red cedar chest, four foot six by three foot," was its specification.

"But who can have taken them?" said she, as they stood in the empty front room after a tour of inspection. "There was crockery ware, besides, and oh, ever so many things, and Mr. Dobree was so kind. He wouldn't take a penny for them. You remember, George, he said, 'When I give a friend a box of cigars, I don't take the bands off them. Whatever is there you can have.' And now there's nothing."

"Maybe the Kanakas have taken them," said Bowlby.

"Or Seedbaum," said Connart.

"As like as not," replied the captain. "He seems to look on the blessed place as his. He told me down in the cabin he reckoned he was king of Maleku and that all the Kanakas jumped to his orders as if he was king. He's got a clutch on the place, there's no denying

that, and he manages to keep missionaries away somehow or 'nother. I'm afraid you're going to have trouble with that chap."

"I'm not afraid of him," said Connart. "I've got a revolver and can use it if worst comes to the worst."

"Oh, it's not revolvers I'm thinkin' of," said the captain. "It's trickery. He'd trick the devil out of his hoofs and then make gelatin of them, would Seedbaum. Have no trade dealin's with him, take my advice. Just stick to the Kanakas."

"Let's go and ask him, right now, if he knows where the things have gone to," said Mrs. Connart.

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Bowlby. "He's sure to lie. But, anyhow, it'll clear matters."

Seedbaum's house was a substantially built coral, lime-washed building with a broad veranda in which hung a cage containing a parrot. The garden was neat and well tended, and the whole place had an air of quiet prosperity, neatness, and order, as if the better part of the owner's character were here exhibited for the general view.

Seedbaum was seated on the veranda, reading a San Francisco paper obtained from Bowlby. Seeing them approach, he rose to greet them.

"I've come to ask you about the furniture in our house," said Connart. "There were quite a lot of things left by the last man, and I have a list of them, but everything has gone—been taken away. Do you know anything about the matter?"

"I don't know anything of what you call furniture," said the other. "Wiart sold me his sticks, when he left, for fifty dollars, and a bad bargain it was."

"He sold you them?"

"Yes."

"But they belonged to Mr. Dobree."

"Oh, did they? Well, Dobree will have to dispute that with Wiart. Wiart said they were his."

"Have you his receipt?"

"Lord, no! There was no receipt in the matter. I handed him over the dollars, and he handed me over the rubbish. It was a favor to him."

"Was there a red cedar-wood chest?" asked Mrs. Connart.

"There was. It's in my house now. You can see it through the door."

Through the open door, which gave a view of the front room, Mrs. Connart saw the object of her desire. It was a beauty—solid, moth defying, with brass corners and brass handles. It was hers by all right, and Seedbaum had tricked her out of it. She spoke.

"That chest is mine," said she. "Mr. Dobree gave it to me. It was his property, and Mr. Wiart had no right to sell it."

"Well," said Seedbaum, "he sold it, and if there's any trouble over it, it will be between Dobree and Wiart. Wiart was going to Japan—so he said when he left here—so Dobree had better go to Japan and have it out with him."

Mrs. Connart turned.

"Come," said she to the others. "There is no use talking any more to this person. I will write to Mr. Dobree."

They turned away, and Seedbaum sat down again to read his newspaper.

"That's what I said," spoke Bowlby. "Monkey tricks. You see how he's placed. Wiart's gone Lord knows where, and Pacific-coast law don't run here. The way for you to do is to lay low and then fetch him in the eye unexpected, somehow. Though if you take my advice, you'll give him a wide offing. There's no use in fightin' with alligators. Better leave them be. Hullo! What's that?"

They turned.

Seedbaum had come out of the veranda. A passing native had roused his ire for some reason or other and the redoubtable Seedbaum was storm-

ing at him. Then he kicked the native, and the latter, a big, powerful man, turned and ran.

"The coward!" said Mrs. Connart.

"I expect that chap ain't a coward," said Bowlby. "He's just 'feared of Seedbaum. I reckon there're some curious things in nature. I've seen a whole ship's company livin' in terror of a hazin' captain. They could have hove him overboard and swore he fell over—for the after guard was as set against him as the fo'c'sle—but they didn't. Just let themselves be driv' like sheep and kicked like terriers. It's the same with the Kanakas on this island, I expect."

"He's got a personal ascendancy over them," said Connart.

"I reckon he's got something like that," said Captain Bowlby.

III.

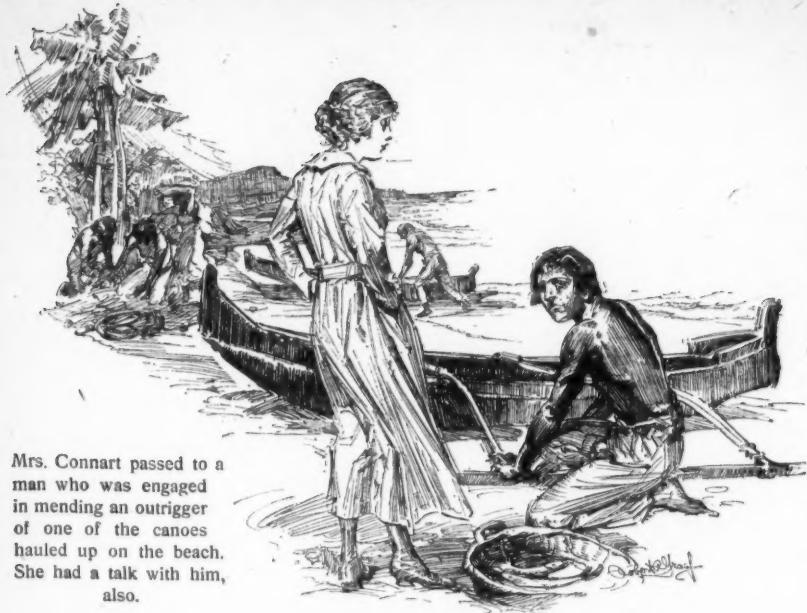
In a week they were settled down, and a few days later, the cargo having been landed and stored, the *Golden Light* took her departure.

They went down to the beach to see her off, they watched her topsails vanish beyond the reef, and they returned feeling very much alone in the world. A good man is warmth and light even to the souls of sinners. Captain Bowlby was illiterate, his language was free, he was not a saint, but he was a good, human man right through. The sea turns out characters like this just as she turns out shells. It is a pity that they have to cling to the ocean and the beaches; the cities need them.

"I feel just as if I had lost a near relation," said Mrs. Connart.

"Well, we'll have him back soon," said her husband. "It's up to us now to get the copra to give him a cargo."

Next morning the new trader began business by laying out a selection of goods in the veranda of his store. Mrs. Connart, who knew something of the Polynesian dialects, and who had the



Mrs. Connart passed to a man who was engaged in mending an outrigger of one of the canoes hauled up on the beach. She had a talk with him, also.

art of picking up unknown tongues, had already got in touch with the Kanakas. They charmed and pleased her, especially the children, and wherever she went, she was greeted by friendly faces. It seemed to her that the population of this island, leaving out Seedbaum, her husband, and herself, consisted entirely of children—children of different sizes and different ages, but children all the same.

Returning that day from a long walk in the woods, she found Connart smoking a pipe on the veranda of their house. He looked rather depressed.

"I can't make it out," said he. "There's no trade doing."

"Maybe they don't know you have started in business yet."

"Oh, yes, they do. Lots of them have passed and seen the store open. They've turned to look at the goods and they seemed attracted, but they went on."

"Well, give them time," said she.

"Look!" said Connart. "There's copra going to Seedbaum's. They're trading with him, right enough."

Mrs. Connart watched the copra bearers, but said nothing.

In her heart she felt that Seedbaum was moving against them by some stealthy means. At first she thought that it might be possible he had worked upon the native mind and induced the Kanakas to put a taboo upon the newcomers, but she dismissed this idea at once. There was no taboo. The Kanakas were not a bit afraid of either her or her husband; on the contrary, there was every evidence of friendliness.

"Well," she said that night, when the store had been closed for the day without a knife or a stick of tobacco changing hands, "there's nothing to be done till we find out why they are acting so. It's that creature, I am sure. He began by robbing me of my beautiful cedar-

wood chest, and he's going on to rob you of your chances in business. Well, let him beware. I'm Christian enough not to wish to hurt him, but I'm Christian enough to believe there's a Power that punishes the wicked, and he's wicked. I knew him for a wicked man directly he came on board the ship."

"He keeps to himself, and that's one good thing," said Connart. "But I don't see how he can stop the natives from trading with us."

"I don't either, but I know he does," said she.

The next day passed without business being done, and the next.

"We may as well shut up shop, it seems to me," said Connart. "How would it be if you spoke to some of these people and asked them what is the matter?"

"I've thought of that," said his wife, "and I held off because—because—Oh, I don't know! It seems sort of indecent to ask people why they don't come to one's store. That's because I'm city bred, I suppose. But I'll do it. I'll do it to-morrow morning, first thing. One mustn't let one's feelings stand in the way when one's living is concerned."

"I wish we had never come here," said he, "for your sake."

"Never come here!" she cried. "Why, I wouldn't for the earth have gone anywhere else! I love the place and I love the people, and what are difficulties? Why, difficulties are the main excitement in life. If life wasn't an obstacle race, it would be a very flat affair. George, we have got to beat that man, and I'm going to! You wait and see!"

He kissed her and blessed her, and they sat down that night to a game of cribbage, Seedbaum and the wickedness of the world forgotten.

Next morning after breakfast, Mrs. Connart went out. She passed through the village and on to the beach, brilliant

in the morning light, breeze blown and filled with the murmurs of the reef. Some natives were pulling in a net, and she watched them, chatting to them and playing with the children who had come down to secure the little fish. Then she had a talk with a woman who was standing by, a woman dark and straight as an arrow, a woman mild-eyed and with a voice sweet as the sound of running water.

Leaving her, Mrs. Connart passed to a man who was engaged in mending an outrigger of one of the canoes hauled up on the beach. She had a talk with him, also.

Then she returned, walking slowly and thoughtfully, to the house, where she found her husband.

"George," said she, "I am right. It is that creature. The people hate him, but they are afraid of him. It seems absolutely absurd, but it is so. He holds them in a spell. He kicks them and beats them, but they are not afraid of that. It's just him."

"Good Lord," said Connart, "why on earth don't they rise against him and tell him to go to the devil? He's only one man, anyway."

"I don't know," said she. "It's a mystery of human nature. He's the tyrant type, and it's always been the same in the world—there's some sort of magnetism in that type that keeps folk under. History is full of that. It's the soft man and the kindly man and the good man that's assassinated, but tyrants seem to go free. He's what he said he was—the king of this place. Well, we must see what we can do to pull him from his throne. I wish there were more whites here."

"That's the bother," said Connart.

Next morning they found a basket of fruit in their veranda, a gift from some unknown person. It was as if the Kanakas, afraid to show their sympathy and friendliness openly for the

strangers, had done it in this manner. But no one came to trade.

That night, two chickens, some sweet potatoes, and another basket of fruit were deposited in the same place.

"And we can't thank them," said Mrs. Connart, "but I believe these haven't all come from one person. I think it's every one here. They all like us. Oh, George, isn't it maddening that we can't have them openly our friends just because of that beast?"

"It is," said George.

Now at eleven o'clock that morning, Mrs. Connart, seated on the veranda and engaged on some needlework, noticed a little native girl, who, pausing at the garden gate and seeming undecided, at last picked up courage, opened the gate, and came toward the house.

Connart was in the house going over some accounts when his wife ran in to him.

"George, come at once!" cried she. "Such a dreadful thing! They've risen against Seedbaum and they're killing him somewhere in the woods, and they want us to go and see!"

"Good Lord!" cried he. "*Killing* him! Want us to go and see! Are they mad?"

He picked up his hat and came out on the veranda, where the pretty little native girl was waiting, a flower of the scarlet hibiscus in her hair and calm contentment in her eyes.

"I can't quite make out all she says," said Mrs. Connart, "but I can make out her meaning."

"You'd better stay here," said he, "while I go. There may be trouble."

"I'm not afraid," she replied. "Come on. We may be too late."

They followed the child.

"Tell her to hurry," said Connart.

"She says we need not hurry," replied she. "As far as I can make out, they are only going to kill him. I expect they have him a prisoner somewhere. Well, much as I hate him, I'm glad we will be able to save him."

"That depends on how the natives take it," said he.

The child led them from the road by a path trod by the copra gatherers, a path running through the wonderland of the woods, a green gloom where the soaring palms shot upward through a twilight roofed with moving shadows and sun sparkles.

They reached a glade where a number of natives were seated in a circle. Above them and swinging by a cord from two trees hung a little disk, about half the size of a tambourine. The disk was made of cane, and so constructed as to leave a small hole in the center. An old native woman, seated under the disk, was clapping her hands and repeating something that sounded like an incantation. Every pair of eyes in the whole of that assembly was fixed upon the disk.

The child whispered something to Mrs. Connart. She turned from the child and whispered to her husband.

"It's only witchcraft. That's a soul trap. They are waiting for a fly to pass through the hole in that thing. If it does, then Seedbaum will die."

"Good heavens!" murmured Connart with a half laugh. "Why, the fellow hasn't any soul—not enough to furnish a fly!"

They watched patiently for ten minutes. There were plenty of flies. They rested on the little tambourine, crawled round its edge, but not one went through the hole.

"Come," whispered Connart.

They withdrew, taking the path back.

"It's pathetic," murmured she.

"It's damned foolishness," he replied. "They trade with him and let him kick them and then go on with that nonsense. If they refused him copra, they would bring him to his senses quick enough."

"Anyhow, they hate him," said she.

"Much good that is!" he replied.



Seedbaum saw her coming, couldn't understand, caught the first lash on his left arm and along his back, and his yell brought the village flocking.

IV.

Now it came about that the soul trap—turning out a dead failure, since not a single fly went through the hole—instead of destroying Seedbaum, fixed him on a pedestal more secure than that which he had hitherto occupied.

"He was indestructible, and the power which he exercised over the native mind threatened to be as indestructible as himself.

However, vengeance was coming—retribution for all the wrongs he had committed, his swindlings, brutalities, and beatings.

It came in this wise:

One afternoon Mrs. Connart, seated in the veranda and reading, heard the cries of a child.

Right in front of the house, King Seedbaum was beating a native child for some fault or fancied disrespect toward his royal highness, cuffing it and cuffing it, while the squeals of the cuffed one affronted the heavens and the ears of all listeners.

Now to touch a child or a dog or a cat in Mrs. Connart's presence was to raise a devil. White as death, she rushed into the house and, white as death, she rushed out again. She held her riding whip in her hand, a Mexican quirt, lady's size, but horribly efficient in energetic hands.

Seedbaum saw her coming, couldn't understand, caught the first lash on his left arm and along his back—he was wearing the pajama suit—and his yell

brought the village flocking and Connart running from a field where he was laying out some plants.

He saw the quirt lashing over Seedbaum's shoulder, across his legs, and across his back, for the king was now running, running and pursued for ten yards or so while the quirt got one last blow in. Then Connart had his wife in his arms, and she was weeping.

"Did he touch you?" cried Connart.

"No—it was a child!" she gasped. "Beast! Look! He has run into his house!"

The street was filled with a crowd that, all through the beating, had remained spellbound. Now it broke up into knots and small parties, all talking together excitedly.

Connart, with his arm round his wife, drew her into the house. She sat down on a couch and laughed and sobbed. She was half hysterical, but not for long.

"I couldn't help it," she said. "I would do it again. It's not because of us—but because he was beating a child."

"Brute!" said Connart. "I'll go down now and give him more! I want to have it out with him right now!"

He turned to the door. She caught him.

"No," she cried, "he's had enough! He won't do it again. Listen! What's that?"

From away in the direction of Seedbaum's house came a sound like the swarming of angry bees, also shouts. They rushed to the door and saw Seedbaum—Seedbaum with fifty people around him, all trying to beat him at the same time.

"Good God," said Connart, "you've taught them the trick! They'll kill him!"

"He's got away!" cried Mrs. Connart.

Seedbaum, breaking from the crowd, was making up the street, the whole village after him. He passed the Connarts' house and headed for the woods, where he disappeared. Then his pursuers drew off and, rushing to the house of Connart, swarmed at the railings, shouting and waving and laughing, while Mrs. Connart interpreted.

"They say he'll never come back to the village again," said she, "for they'll kill him if he does—that he'll have to live in the woods. Oh, George, I'm frightened! What will be the end of it all?"

The end was a whale ship that came into the lagoon. Seedbaum, living in the woods and supported by the generosity of the Connarts, was given notice by the three chiefs of the island, Matua, Tamura, and Ratupea by name, that if he did not go away in the whale ship, he would be killed before the next ship arrived. And he went.

He was almost friendly with the Connarts, in return for their food and protection, at the last, and as the natives would allow him to take nothing with him, he had to leave everything behind him, including the red cedar-wood chest, which thus came back to its rightful owner.

He did not even threaten the natives with governmental retribution; he knew he was done and placed out of court by his own conduct.

But the thing that always remained with Connart out of this affair was the fact that a population of active and vigorous people would still have been downtrodden by a merciless tyrant but for a little, quiet, calm-eyed woman, who had, unconsciously and just from an uprising of her own spirit, "shown them the trick."

Spirit—after all, what else is there in the world beside it?



ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. NONNAMAKER

What a young man learned about woman and war.

To his fellow townspeople, who had always liked him, Compton's position was unassailable. He was past the draft age—thirty-three; he was of no great robustness of physique; and he was the only son of his mother and she a widow. Besides, did not life have to go on at home, and what would happen if all the young chemist apothecaries in the country should see their duty in terms of trenches? Salesport was selfishly glad that Jerry was there where he belonged, in the rear of the shop at the corner of Main and Essex, where his father and grandfather had been before him, superintending the composition of pills and cold cream, instead of saving civilization at Verdun.

But Jerry, while he seemed to accept his community's acceptance of him, knew, in the depths of his troubled heart, that he stayed at home chiefly that he might have, unhindered, his chance with Leila Summerson. Now that Stephen had managed, like the dare-devil he was, to enter the most dangerous branch of the service, perhaps he, Jerry, could summon resolution to woo Leila.

She had grown up, suddenly, overnight, the way girls do, four or five years before. Jerry had found himself as suddenly in love with her. But he

was of a torturing diffidence, and he had made haste slowly, shyly, even in those months when he had had the field to himself. A precious year had passed with no word spoken, and then Stephen had been upon them, good looking, gay, no nondescript assortment of drab hair, neutral skin, lank figure, and melancholy gray eyes, and—crowning grace and gift!—ignorant of the very definition of shyness. He, too, had become aware that Leila had grown up, and although the realization had not pierced him with an immediate, troublesome desire for domesticity, he had at once constituted himself the chief of her train of squires.

Jerry had stood back, looking on helplessly. He was no sort of dancer, and Stephen was appropriately nicknamed "Isadora" because of his devotion to Terpsichorean art. He—Jerry—could no more have arrayed himself in fantastic garments, wigs, and grease paint for the benefit of the Belgian refugees or for the sport of a moment than he could have faced Salesport in no garments at all, while Stephen, whenever he was at home, was the very life of the Comedy Club. He and Leila used to play "opposite" to each other in the Christmas theatricals, and Jerry used to wait, his heart a lump of sharp

ice in his bosom, to learn that they had decided to convert make-believe into real.

Every time the season had passed without that climax of calamity, he had promised himself that he would no longer delay to put his own fate to the test. But always, before he had fulfilled his valiant resolution, Stephen was again at home from his engineering course, for a week-end or a mid-year, a cousin's wedding, or an Easter. It seemed to Jerry that holidays were much more frequent in institutions of learning than when he himself had been immured in one of them; and also that Cambridge, thanks to modern methods of transportation, was far too near to Salesport. The result of Stephen's bright descents upon the town was always the same—Jerry's little buds of hope and determination could not unfold.

Yet Leila was so sweet to him that he could not understand, in his valorous moments of reflection, why he lacked the courage to pour out his tale of love and yearning. She was always ready to walk soberly with him instead of flashing about the countryside in a sixty-horse-power motor, a form of amusement he himself detested. Though she loved to dance, she sat out unnumbered dances with him in apparent contentment. She had even once made him some suggestions as to the remodeling of the store at the corner of Main and Essex, unchanged since his grandfather's time. That day he had almost spoken. But, as it happened, Stephen, his big pigskin valise lightly swinging in his hand, had passed Doctor Summerson's house where Jerry and Leila were sitting, and the chill of fear had fallen over Jerry again, at the sight of the gay waving of hands between the two. Leila was never gay like that with him.

But now, at last, Stephen had withdrawn. He was down on Long Island,

in an aviation camp. The bright face of danger smiled upon him with lures more potent than those of any maiden. Jerry, relieved, obscurely ashamed of his relief, devoted himself to Leila.

The girl was, as always, kind and sweet. With the rest of the town, she seemed to take it for granted that he should stay at home. No faintest breath of question or of criticism ever seemed to mar their meetings. Yet, far more than in the days when Stephen had been with them, liable to leap from a train or a motor car at any inopportune moment with vivid flash of color and laughter—far more than in those days, Jerry felt the youth between him and the attainment of his heart's desire. The sensitiveness that made him shy gave him powers of apperception; he knew, achingly, miserably, that Leila was less with him than she had been used to be. She was never absent-minded, but some part of her thought was withdrawn, was elsewhere. She interposed no barrier to his courtship; she was always available, always charming, attentive, sympathetic. But she was not wholly with him as she sat, knitting, talking, playing the piano, singing softly in the twilight.

Once, desperate, he asked her the question: "Leila, do you think I ought to enlist?" She raised eyes rather startled than frightened to him and answered:

"I never thought of it." Then she mused for a moment. "You know," she added, "I'm not a fierce patriot—only a moderate one. I almost think I could become a pacifist, if I thought much about it."

"I'm not with you there," he said. "The more I think, the less of a pacifist I am. Why—But I don't want to philosophize. I want to talk about me. Do you think I should go?"

"Only if you think so," she answered.

"Do you know why I don't go—why I don't want to go?" His voice was a



He had fancied that he could win her from rivals by staying at home with her while they left her, and he found her wholly his only now when he, too, was leaving her.

little thick, his gray eyes appealed to her for help to make himself clear. But though she looked at him fully, friendly-wise, gravely, she did not help him. And then, as always, came the interruption. The telephone rang. She walked to it, and he heard her startled "Oh, Maida!" Maida was Stephen Hepburn's sister.

After a few ejaculatory seconds, Leila put up the receiver and came back to her chair.

"Maida says Stephen is coming home on a forty-two hours' furlough. They think he is going over, though, of course, his telegram said nothing about it. They want us—dad and me—to come to dinner this evening. It will be less harrowing for them."

"I suppose," he said ineptly, jealously, "that this will put an end to our walk to-morrow, out to the cove."

"Why?" she asked.

And because to have answered honestly would have meant the story of his troubled love of four years, he only said:

"No, then? That's jolly of you. All right. I'll call for you at half past three?"

Would she, he wondered, be pledged to Stephen to-morrow afternoon at half past three? What more natural, if, indeed, the boy were home for his final leave-taking?

But when, with miserably beating heart, he came for her the next afternoon, she seemed the same Leila she had been before Stephen had enlisted and gone away—sweet, quiet, glad with some deep, untroubled gladness. That faint, undefinable feeling of withdrawal which had bothered him all the weeks of Stephen's training had passed, as a

mist dissolves in the morning sun. But he still asked himself questions as to the cause of the heart-warming change, and to her he dared no more a word of love than he had dared it yesterday.

Stephen went again—a crowd of his old friends at the train to wave him off, and to drown, with loud laughter and calls of "Good luck, old man!" any sound of strangled sobbing there might have been from any of the group. Jerry was there with the rest of them. If Stephen had wanted her, how had she been able to withstand him, so manly, so resolute, so compellingly gay?

And surely that last look in Stephen's eyes as the train pulled out was for her, standing with her arm about Maida's suddenly collapsed shoulders. Surely Stephen cared. He would know tonight!

But again, that night, he failed in resolution. There she sat before him, the very embodiment of all his longings, lovely, good, generous, with some deep spring of gladness and confidence in her heart which his own so sadly lacked. She sat before him, giving him her smiles and her voice, her ready attention, while her fingers deftly turned the heel of a stocking. She spoke of Stephen, and her words were not those of an aching heart. Yet, once more, there had fallen between them the impalpable veil which had lifted briefly yesterday while Stephen had been at home.

Bewildered, wretched, beat upon by longings, by obscure shames, he went home. He could not sleep. He sat by his window, smoking, trying to understand.

"Could it be that?" he heard himself asking aloud. For he had just told himself that she was withdrawn from him toward Stephen only when Stephen was absent from her. In these days, perhaps, the hearts and thoughts of women must be, however unconsciously, rather

with those that go than with those that stay. The hearts of such women as Leila, at any rate—

He suddenly found himself sleepy and able to sleep. When he awoke, the sun was high. He had a sense of buoyancy, of assurance, such as he never remembered to have had before in all his life. Without misgivings he was going to offer himself to his country's fighting forces. He was going to fool himself no longer with sophistries about the service he rendered by staying at home; he was going, since some of Leila's heart had preceded him, over there, where he might capture those tender, mysterious, brooding thoughts of hers that would always elude him should he stay at home.

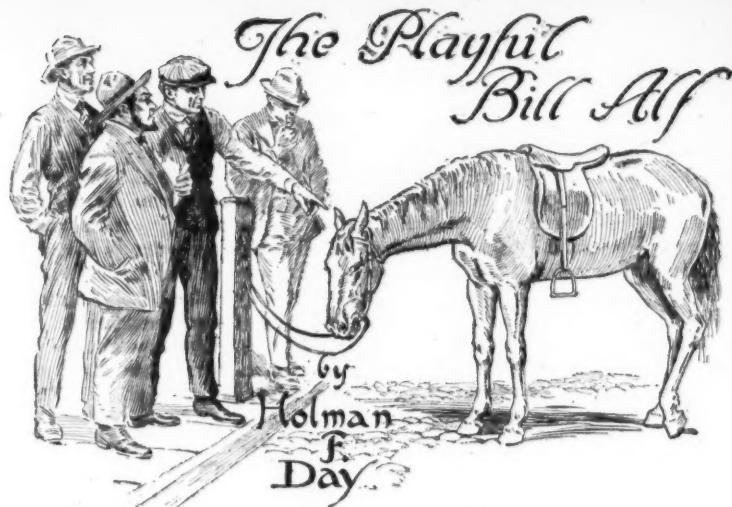
When he told her that night, and told her, too, all that had been pent in his heart for the long, inarticulate years, he knew that his moment of illumination had been a true one. For in her sudden tears of fright and pride and joy and renunciation there was no memory of another man, no little wing of longing and pity beating out toward another. He had fancied that he could win her from rivals by staying at home with her while they left her, and he found her wholly his only now when he, too, was leaving her.

Whistling, he walked home that golden, all-fulfilling night. There was a new spring to his stride, a new carriage of his shoulders.

"It has made another man of you already, my dear," his mother said, accepting proudly his tale of enlistment.

"It is not that," he answered. "Not that alone. It is——"

And aloud he told her of Leila, while in his heart he kept rejoicing that not a vagrant touch of tenderness and pity she would feel in all the months to come but would fall on him like dew. For he, too, would be there where love reached outward in such mighty waves.



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

A humorist in Scotaze—Cap'n Sproul at his near-best—the Widow Simmons—and Postmaster Kragg. The story is as funny as might be expected.

A HORSE, saddled and bridled, was hitched outside the place of business of Wilbur Alfred Cobb on the main street of the village. That's all—merely an ordinary horse; a sort of middle-class horse, so to speak; nothing that would draw a second glance, one would think. Yet half a dozen men were standing on the sidewalk near the horse, staring at the dozing animal and grinning and buzzing humorous comments.

One of the group stopped Cap'n Aaron Sproul when he came stumping past on his way from the post office to the office of his newspaper, the *Scotaze Hornet*, loaded with an armful of exchanges into which he was anxious to dip.

"Lay your eyes on that, Cap'n Sproul," advised the citizen with a chuckle. "Item for your paper!"

"What's an item?"

"Hoss."

The cap'n bestowed careful scrutiny and noted nothing that was out of the ordinary.

"Well, what about it?"

"Belongs to Bill Alf. He has just bought it off'm Well Kragg."

Cap'n Sproul was thoroughly posted on the village short cuts of nomenclature. "Bill Alf" meant the gentleman who was heralded in front of his place of business on a signboard: "Wilbur Alfred Cobb, Taxidermist." "Well Kragg" was the postmaster, known officially as Wellington Kragg.

"What's the matter with the hoss?"

"Oh, guess he's all right enough. But the idee is that Bill Alf has bought a hoss. That's where the joke comes in."

The cap'n was equally well posted on other matters besides village nicknames.

Mr. Cobb was an unfortunate man and didn't know it. A sense of humor and a hankering for antics had branded

him early in life as a funny man, and he felt obliged to keep up his reputation, so it appeared outwardly. Nobody would ever allow him to be serious. They called on him to appear as the village jester at all the church fairs and grange sociables and ice-cream festivals, and his various "get-ups" elicited squeals of mirth and cackles of laughter. He had a bald head and a fat face with a comical mouth in the middle of it. He stuck to a repertory of four rollicking songs, tried and true and therefore always successful, for most folks do not relish experiments in humor. He was a bachelor, and all the women who were managing local shindigs felt free to call on him for any kind of an errand. He was so thoroughly established as a humorist that once, when an icicle-loaded snow-slide overwhelmed him on the main street and nearly killed him, everybody in sight rolled over and laughed instead of rushing to his assistance. The fact that he suffered a broken arm and was unconscious for an hour or so did not suppress the titters. It was Bill Alf! It just had to be funny!

But Cap'n Aaron Sproul was no sort of a humorist, himself, and was not hypnotized by that quality in others.

"Yes," insisted the citizen who was delaying him, disappointed by the cap'n's solemnity, "I tell ye, that's where the joke comes in!"

"When it comes out where it went in, drop me a postal card, and mebbe I'll call around and have a look at it." He yanked his elbow from the man's grasp.

"Of course there ain't anything specially funny about the hoss as he stands. But it's thinking about Bill Alf owning him! And Bill Alf going hossback riding! Oh, I suppose anybody has got to know Bill Alf real well to get all the flavor of him, but——"

Cap'n Sproul, in his desire to avoid the foolish grins of the men in the

crowd, had been staring in at the window of the taxidermist shop. He found the solemn stare of an owl refreshing. There was a bobcat with a dolorous face. A mounted deer head had eyes that seemed to be weeping. Some squirrels, a raccoon, and two hawks displayed no hilarity, to say the least, in the stares they set on the outside world through the window behind which they waited in stiff and stuffed poses for purchasers. The cap'n broke in on the citizen's encomium:

"There are a few critters in there who have been associating with him about as close as anybody. They don't seem to be tee-heeing as much as this crowd outside."

"Oh, but they're stuffed!"

"Mebbe the hoss is, too. I haven't seen him move yet." The cap'n passed on.

"He ain't much of a hand to lark and play, the cap'n ain't," observed one of the group.

Nevertheless, when Mr. Cobb came out of the shop, an admirer, between giggles, told him what a good joke the cap'n had got off in regard to the horse being stuffed.

"Can't get away from fun, can ye, Bill Alf? Everybody bound to meet you halfway! What's the name of this hoss?" He nudged a neighbor and whispered behind the shield of his palm: "I'll bet he'll have a good one to slam back!"

Mr. Cobb was "dressed up," and there was a confident air about him which suggested that he was sure he had some place to go. His wide mouth was curved in a radiant smile under his snub nose. His trousers were stuffed into cloth gaiters, he was pulling on yellow gloves, and there was an imitation rosebud in a buttonhole of his coat. There was something about that face which provoked laughter. If he had told them that the horse's name was Dobbin, they would have guffawed.

"Name? I'll tell you, gents! Name is Tommy Tornado, out of Thunder-gust Sukey, sired by Cyclone Pete. Walks on air as easy as he does on the land, eats chopped cloud and grows fat, can dance jigs and whistle his own accompaniment. You'll excuse me if I don't go into further details at this time. I have matters to attend to."

He mounted, after a struggle and a few grunts, and walked the horse up the street.

Right then the gossips of Scotaze got hold of a real topic. Mrs. Lucretia Simmons, relict of Undertaker Elisha Simmons—eight months' lodger in the narrow confines of one of his one-hundred-and-thirty-five-dollar couch-style, nickel-trimmed varieties—rode from the driveway of her residence on the village square and waited for the arrival of Mr. Cobb. She was on horseback, too. Her plump figure appeared to good advantage in a riding habit.

"My wife told me that Creeshy was going to take up hossback riding so as to train down in weight a little," stated one of the men on the sidewalk. "But, by golly, this way of going at it is nigh about like giving notice that she is putting number two on perade!"

"Pretty bold, unless she means business with him," commented another. "But he's just the kind that's li'ble to ketch her when she looks back and remembers how she has set across the table three times a day from that old hearse plume of a number one for so many years. 'Lish Simmons' face was just as hard as the leather in them squeaky boots of his. The undertaking business is solemn, of course, but there's no woman who wants to feel that she's tending out on a funeral seven days out of every week."

"If she has picked out Bill Alf," said another, "I think that the tongues of this town ought to be kind. She deserves to have an antidote, and Bill Alf will be just that thing in her case."

Another commentator showed a little jealousy.

"Seems sort of reedicklous, too, for such a whifflehead as he is to catch a widder wuth twenty thousand, a good business, and the best stand of buildings in the village!"

"A man that has made others cheerful shouldn't be begretched a mighty good thing for himself when it comes along. Why, he's always doing something to keep this town perked up! Can't come in contact with 'im without feeling more cheerful. And look there!" The speaker pointed excited finger. "Even his hoss feels funny when Bill Alf is astraddle of him! Dum it, if that ain't a hoss dancing a jig, I never see one!"

"Always has to do just about so much showing off," grumbled the disgruntled one. "That's the style of Bill Alf! Showing off for the widder!"

Whatever were the motives of Mr. Cobb, it was certain that he and his mount were affording a wonderful show for the village square of Scotaze. First the horse plunged about wildly and dashed around the square, as if trying to back up the cyclonic pedigree which Mr. Cobb had given him. There were puddles in hollows after the rain of the preceding day, and the horse's hoofs dashed muddy water high in air. Mr. Cobb lost his hat early, and his bald head gleamed in the autumn sunshine like the helmet of a charging knight.

The first of his foray was a bit astonishing. Other communities, beholding such furious gyrations, might have entertained more or less apprehension and sympathy. Not so Scotaze in the case of Bill Alf Cobb. The onlookers felt that they were entirely sophisticated in regard to him. This was merely some more of his cutting-up. Even the fact that, on one of the rushes of the horse over the sidewalk and against the side of a building, a big window was shattered by the jar did

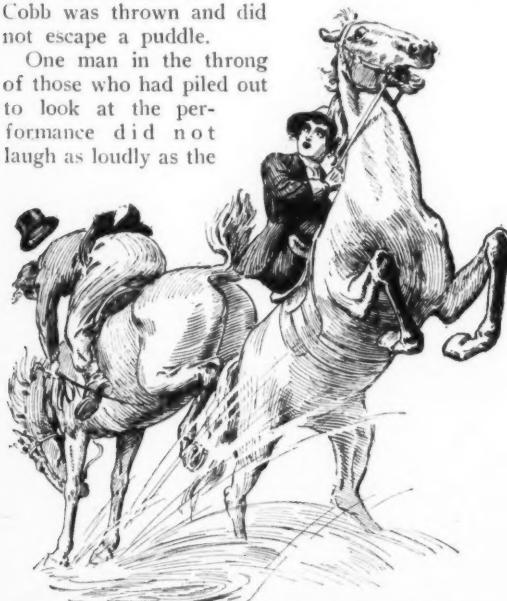
not suggest that Bill Alf meant anything except humor; all humorists go a bit too far at times. When the horse leaped into a puddle near the widow and whirled in a dizzy can-can affair, throwing up a geyser of dirty muck which spattered the new habit and face of Mrs. Simmons, there was no diminution of hilarity in the crowd. Then the rampageous animal kicked out and struck the widow's mount. Her horse bolted with her into her driveway and rushed into the stable.

Her squire's steed seemed to be losing zip.

"Start him to jiggling, Bill Alf," suggested a bystander, "even though she has gone in and left you and you can't do the ladies' chain!"

The horse wavered, staggered against a section of the Simmons' fence, and went down with it. Mr. Cobb was thrown and did not escape a puddle.

One man in the throng of those who had piled out to look at the performance did not laugh as loudly as the



His horse leaped into a puddle near the widow and whirled in a dizzy can-can affair. Then the rampageous animal kicked out and struck the widow's mount.

others. He hurried to the horse; then he pulled his jackknife, pushed wide open with the toe of his boot the mouth of the prostrate animal, dragged the tongue as far out as he was able, and jabbed in the point of his knife. The blood gushed and, after a little while, the horse struggled up.

Mr. Cobb stared on all this from the side lines after he had knuckled mud and water from his eyes.

"What in the name of the wall-eyed Hosea did it all mean?" he asked the volunteer surgeon, the same being the proprietor of the local livery stable.

The man plucked a burdock leaf and wiped his knife blade.

"Blind staggers! That's the old Mac-Peter's hoss, Bill Alf—nicked ear, hock bunch, two white fetlocks, and a strip face! Chronic blind staggerer. Owned him once myself. Who'd ye git him off'm?"

"Well Kragg!"

The livery-stable man pondered for some time, gave Mr. Cobb a queer look, and fondled nose reflectively.

"That's funny," he vouchsafed.

"What's funny?" inquired Mr. Cobb, a quite natural request from a man interested in humor. Up to that point, to judge by his demeanor, Bill Alf had not found any reason to join his fellow citizens in their high enjoyment.

"Why, it's this way," drawled the man. "Well Kragg owned this same hoss once before and dickered him off. Knew that he was a staggerer. But I'll say no more. Never have any relish in starting trouble between friends."

"You needn't worry

about this being trouble between friends—not now," declared Mr. Cobb, with baleful emphasis.

He started for the post office and quite a delegation followed him. Somebody had salvaged his hard hat. Such as it was, he put it on as cover for his unthatched poll. The crown of it was muddy and a portion of the brim hung down over one ear. His celluloid collar had given way in front, and the two ends stuck up beside his head like the horns of an enraged ram.

"Come out from behind that wicket! Come out here where I can talk to you!" shouted Mr. Cobb, after he had stamped into the post office.

Postmaster Kragg's face was sallow, solemn, and elongated, and he framed it in the little window of his pen.

"I am now engaged in my official duties as the servant of Uncle Sam," he stated, his tones as precise as the enunciation of a schoolmaster.

"You suspend them duties long enough to take a good look at me! All over mud, gurry, and splash! Running a chance of getting killed and of killing and scaring others to death! You knew why I wanted a hoss! I told you why I wanted a hoss! You know about hosses and I don't! I trusted in you! And you went to work and unloaded onto me a dynamite bomb with legs and red hair on it! See here, Kragg! I have been suspecting something about you. This thing makes me pretty sure of it. Condemn your hide, I've got a good mind to stand here and expose you!"

"I advise you to be careful, Cobb, how you use that kind of language to an official of the United States Government."

The humorist scraped some of the mud from his coat with the handle of his whip.

"The United States Government ought to be blastnation proud of you as an official! It you'll cheat in one

thing, you'll cheat in another. I'll show you up, even if I have to go to Washington and sit on the steps of the White House all night till I hear 'em grinding coffee for breakfast!"

"Full of your jokes as usual, eh?"

"By gad, this happens to be a time when I ain't joking! I'm going to write to headquarters about you!"

"You'd better wait until your excitement is not affecting your brains, Cobb. I don't believe that you'll find the post-office department much interested in a horse trade down here. And if you write as you're feeling now, they may find out in Washington that you spell God with a little g."

Mr. Cobb threw the remnants of his hat on the floor and swished his whip.

"I dare you to come out from behind there! You knew you were selling me a staggerer! I've got the word of Ase Jepson on it! Do you want me to stand here and tell all in hearing what your reasons were?"

Postmaster Kragg did not lose his self-possession; he had not been astride a raging beast; he was calm.

"You may give us as much of your humor as you see fit."

Mr. Cobb looked from right to left. His friends were grinning. For the first time in his life, it was borne in upon him that a reputation as a jester had its undesirable features. He was not lacking in discernment. What he wanted to say was swelling in him. He had told the truth. He had been rather dimly suspecting that Widower Kragg was a suitor for the hand of the desirable Lucretia. It was partly for that reason he had come to Kragg to boast that the widow had asked her jovial friend, to be her squire on her horseback rides, and he had fallen a victim when the postmaster had offered to secure for him a grand bargain in a safe and kindly horse. All these thoughts rolled over and over tumultuously within him. But he knew, with

all his soul, that if he were to voice them in further complaints and allegations, he would start a laugh that the borders of Scotaze would not restrain.

"It's a good one, just as it stands, Bill Alf," said somebody. "But if there's more of a joke to it, let 'er go!"

"Say, see here! Have you all turned fools in this village, so that you don't know the difference between a joke and serious trouble?"

"You went to work and announced what kind of a hoss it was you'd bought, and then he acted out according to specifications," stated a friend. "After all the trouble you took, it was only right for us to show that we appreciated your efforts."

In spite of his oaths and his malevolent glowerings, they insisted on making it an affair for merriment. He was afraid to stay in the post office any longer; he looked at Kragg's saturnine countenance and felt that his rage was getting away from him. He stamped out to the street as noisily as he had marched in. When the hardware man hailed him—the man who had lost a window—with inquiry as to who would pay for the glass, the street crowd immediately offered to make up the amount by passing the hat.

"We've got that much fun out of it," said a volunteer collector.

It was more of the maddening determination to regard him merely as an entertainer, and Mr. Cobb displayed no gratitude. His gloom deepened when he rang the bell of the Simmons' house and was informed by the hired girl that Mrs. Simmons was too busy to see anybody. The hired girl, being more or less of a privileged character, tartly added that the mistress was cleaning her new dress and was afraid it had been completely ruined.

"And you'd best stay away from here till she gets done talking about that trick hoss of yours and your hankering to be showing off all the time!"

The door was slammed in Mr. Cobb's face; his plaintive efforts at explanation were shut off.

He grabbed the bridle of his "trick" horse, kicked the brute savagely in the ribs, and went dragging him down the street. If a stranger, at that moment, had been informed that this was the village's leading humorist, he would have doubted the statement for most excellent reasons.

That evening, on the strength of certain revelations made by old Dana Goff, the village discussed a matter with much relish.

Postmaster Wellington Kragg had made a formal call on Widow Simmons.

It seemed that Mr. Goff had been passing along the street just as the caller was entering the widow's gate at a fairly early hour in the evening.

"He had on his plug hat and was luggering two paper bags all stuffed out. Where Bill Alf's dancing hoss had splashed water onto the sidewalk, it had got friz over and all glarey after sundown, and Well was walking with his chin up so proud and high that he didn't notice it. And up went his heels and down he ker-slammed, and his paper bags busted, and I helped him pick up what was in 'em—and so I know! Tallman sweetnings and broken candy! Yassir! Sure thing! And if that ain't starting in to court her, then things has changed since I was young."

It was generally felt in Seotaze that things had not changed in real essentials. In a few days it was known that the postmaster was spending his evenings with the widow and that the taxidermist was not. Mr. Kragg was obviously more urbane at the post-office wicket than ever before, plainly relishing some new phase in his existence. But Mr. Cobb, when a friend dropped in on him in the shop and asked to be cheered up with some real, rollicking information about that trick horse, cursed most horribly and flung a stuffed

quill pig at the rapidly retreating friend. Even friendly determination to behold nothing except jest in Bill Alf's operations did choke on the quill-pig proposition; it was a missile intended to do damage. Men stayed away from Mr. Cobb. He toiled with his needles, his wrappings, and his glue, and pondered. He had always entertained the comforting thought that everybody in the world was his friend. Everybody had met him with a grin. But now, when he wanted counsel and consolation, he could not think of one man among his associates who would be likely to treat his troubles with respect.

Their devilish

grins! He knew that he would lose control of himself when they snickered.

But there was one man in town, he reflected, who had never seemed to be affected in any degree by the Bill Alf humor—or by any other brand, as Mr. Cobb remembered it. In that man's presence, so Mr. Cobb felt, he would not be goaded by frantic desire to rise and smack a smirking face. And Mr. Cobb was lonesome, having been wonted to human companionship.

One day he walked into Cap'n Sproul's office, carrying something rolled up in a newspaper.

"I realize that we have never been in any ways sociable, sir, but it has come to me all of a sudden that most of the folks in this town are blasted



"And up went his heels and down he ker-slammed, and his paper bags busted."

fools who don't have any sympathy for a man that's in deep trouble. I want to associate with somebody who is on a higher plane of intelligence, after this. I reckon you're on that plane. I have picked out of my stock a little present that seems to fit your case—illustrating wisdom, so to speak."

He unwrapped his parcel and disclosed a big horned owl. The cap'n did not exhibit gratification.

"You get the meaning, I hope," pleaded Mr. Cobb.

"Le's see! I believe you have quite a reputation as a joker," suggested the gentleman who had been honored.

"I'm trying to shed that reputation, sir. I have woke up. There's nothing in this joking business. These days, I

feel just the way this owl looks—and that's all-fired solemn. But he seems to belong with a man like you—fits your case, I say."

"Do you think that a critter which sits and simply looks wise and hasn't got an ounce of brains fits my case?"

"But I ain't joking now," mourned Mr. Cobb.

"If you're in earnest about it, it's worse than joking. It's slurring me."

Bill Alf looked from the owl to the cap'n in helpless confusion.

"But I'm going to take it from whence it came," Cap'n Sproul went on. "Everlasting joking affects a man's brains. I've noticed that much in other cases besides yours. I have a lot of sympathy for you, Cobb. You mean well enough and you stick to your business close—though stuffing dead animals never struck me as any more important than trying to fry fog—and I've heard my wife and other wimmen say that you're always willing and helpful in running errands. So you may set that owl up on my desk, and I'll return thanks by giving you a squib in the next issue of the *Hornet*. I'll announce that you have reformed from being a humorist."

"That will please me and serve notice on all, sir."

"How did you stand with the Widder Simmons before you went up and frisked around her with that dancing kodobus?" asked the cap'n, so bluntly that Mr. Cobb blinked as if a gun had been fired under his nose.

"Gug-go-good!" he stammered. "We was coming along all right."

"That was the way I heard it. She told my wife that she liked you—said that your face rested her and cheered her up. Near the end of her living with Simmons, she was afraid that the mollygrubs was getting hold of her and affecting her mind. Said she was tempted sometimes to go jump overboard. I'm afraid she's making a mis-

take with Kragg. He ain't enough different from number one. I'm considerable of an expert on matrimony—and my wife is interested in seeing the widder make a new start in the right way."

"He cheated me on that hoss. He was trying to get me into trouble," whined Mr. Cobb. "If he hadn't done it, I'm certain that I could have put the announcement of the engagement into your paper this week. But every time I go to the house now, she sends word by the hired girl that she's busy. But she lets that cussed old human spike come in to see her. I'm a good mind to lay for him with a shotgun. I'll bet a jury would let me off after I told the story of that hoss trade."

"And then again a jury might be notional and soak you," remonstrated the cap'n. "There's no telling about juries any more than there is about wimmen. Both are notional. The Widder Simmons is notional. You understand that I ain't holding out any special hopes to you, Cobb, but I'm looking into this case a little deeper than you are because I can see both sides. It may be that she's trying to wean you from that joking habit of yours. Haven't felt much like joking lately, eh? No! So she's done that much."

"But that hoss wasn't any joke!"

"Fault of your reputation, Cobb! Fault of your reputation! You've got to live down being a humorist like other men have to walk straight a long time to prove that they've got over being horse thieves and burglars. Didn't you brag in public what you was going to do with that hoss before you started up there to meet her? She told my wife somebody said you bragged."

"But it was in fuu and—"

The cap'n put up hand of protest.

"Exactly! You have been too blamed funny all your life! That widder likes fun. She says so. She likes good spirits to take her mind off'm what she has been through in the past. But

there's such a thing as good spirits running into the delirium-tremens stage. I reckon she didn't know what you was going to try on next, to start a laugh for the loafers in this village."

There was something in all this chattiness, curly phrased though it was, that inspired hope in Mr. Cobb. He knew that Cap'n Aaron Sproul usually had good reasons for any talk he made. He dared to guess that this was indirect suggestion from the widow herself; intimation, perhaps, that he might be reinstated if he could convince her that he was not the reckless roisterer he had seemed to be. And fickleness had not appeared to be a part of her nature. Bill Alf, though conscious of his shortcomings, found something suspicious in this sudden toleration by her of Wellington Kragg.

Optimism was a radiant sun which was ever behind all the clouds of Mr. Cobb's temperament, gilding their edges when they were blackest. He winked at the cap'n.

"I guess you know what you're talking about!"

"I 'most always do," replied Cap'n Sproul tartly.

"It may not be a promise, but I take it for a hint."

"A man who can't steer straight, after course and bearings have been given him, better leave loose o' the wheel and let the other fellow bring her into harbor."

"I reckon I get you, Cap'n Sproul. I take it, however, that she wants me to be gay and hand her a few innocent laughs from time to time as the spirit moves."

The cap'n nodded indorsement.

"I'm going to be kind o' outspoken right here," confided the suitor. "The notion hits me that you're standing in closer in this thing than you're willing to own up to me right now. I can't very well make her laugh by hollering at her from the street or doing hand-

springs in her front yard. What is your tip as to when I'd better march up to her door, acting as if the whole thing was sort of understood as starting over fresh and all kindly?"

"Well, if you drop around there this evening, right after you see my wife and me coming out through the front gate—"

Cap'n Sproul halted suddenly. It seemed as if it would not be necessary to postpone the resumption of amicable relations until evening. The Widow Simmons walked into the office, her cheeks red-tinted by the crisp air.

But at her heels stalked Postmaster Kragg, an effectual stopper on any proposed mediation. The widow showed considerable perturbation when she beheld Mr. Cobb and turned away from his beseeching gaze. She recovered herself in a moment and elevated her chin.

"As long as it has got to be that way, I suppose we may as well have it out and over with," she said.

She sat down in a chair with her back turned on Mr. Cobb. A nod to him, a look of commiseration, a word of kindly explanation might have softened the blow she proceeded to deliver, but she had her own way of going about the matter.

"Cap'n Sproul, we have dropped in to order a little printing done. Will you please show me your samples of wedding cards?"

The cap'n had considerable trouble in getting his voice back sufficiently to break the silence which followed on that request. It almost seemed as if the stuffed owl had opened wider eyes of astonishment, swapping stares with the astounded Bill Alf.

"You mean wedding cards for you and—and—"

"For me and Mr. Kragg, Cap'n Sproul."

"But it was only last night you was



She sat down in a chair with her back turned on Mr. Cobb. "Cap'n Sproul, we have dropped in to order a little printing done. Will you please show me your samples of wedding cards?"

up to my house and told me and my wife——"

"I'll thank you if you do not undertake to discuss personal and private matters of mine in public, sir!" The buxom widow was emphatic. "What is said between friends across a supper table should be sacred. I took you to be a man who used care in such matters."

For a few moments the cap'n acted as if he were going to smash her high ideals in regard to his capacity for prudence and chivalry. His mouth worked and his eyes flamed. Then he pulled out a drawer and produced a box filled with samples of cards. The widow began her inspection, handing along the cards to Mr. Kragg.

"By mighty!" bawled Mr. Cobb, after he had held in his speech as long as he

was able. "I suppose any woman always has the right to hand a man the mitten, but a man has some rights when she hands it to him the wrong way! I claim my rights!"

She did not turn her head to look at him. "It seems to me, Mr. Cobb, that the way I'm doing this is better than any long discussions between us. At least, there's no chance of your misunderstanding the situation!"

"There's a misunderstanding somewhere, Creeshy! I have just been led to expect——"

He gulped and halted, sudden conviction seizing him that betrayal of Cap'n Sproul might be dangerous. He was not able to comprehend what the expression on that gentleman's face signified just then.

"Expect what?" she demanded.

"Nothing."

"Then your expectations must be perfectly satisfied, sir." She tapped a card and handed it along to her prospective husband. "I think this one with the embossed hearts and ribbons is real pretty, Mr. Kragg."

"Yes," he admitted. "But I suppose that the filigree makes 'em cost a whole lot more."

"They do cost more'n the plain," put in the cap'n savagely. "But I'm willing to make a discount in the case of steady customers," he added, his satire pointed by the fact that Mr. Kragg had been thrice bereft of a wife.

"It is mighty plain that somebody has been at you, Creeshy!" insisted the discarded suitor. "It's this pickerel-eyed old postage-stamp lapper! I'll bet you it is! If he has lied one-half as much to you as he did to me, so as to work off that hoss on me, it's plain enough why you're turning your back and holding your nose in the air. But what he has told was a lie. It *must* have been a lie, for he don't know how to tell the truth."

"Understand this, Mr. Cobb: It isn't a matter of anybody's say-so! That's why I don't care to discuss it. I have simply made my own mind up about my own business. I liked you. I like you now. But life mustn't be all fun and laughter. I have been thinking the matter over very carefully. We are called on to make sacrifices in this world. In some lines, dignity and standing are necessary. I'll say that Mr. Kragg is going to take my undertaking business in hand, so that I won't have to depend any longer on hired help. I don't think that any more explanation is needed."

Mr. Cobb sat stricken and voiceless. So she was picking an undertaker instead of a husband! On that basis of selection, he knew that he was out of the running and he hadn't an argument to offer.

"And as for you, Cap'n Sproul, I hope, after you think the thing over, you'll make allowances for a woman's heart and have respect for a woman's head. You'll please forget everything else I have said to you in the past. We'll have the embossed cards. It'll be two weeks to the wedding, and you'll have plenty of time to print them."

She rose and retired, with Mr. Kragg at heel.

"You see, Cobb, what your reputation has done for you," remarked the cap'n with severity. "You'd never fit a funeral. Deceaseds in these parts would be putting special clauses into their wills, forbidding you to step foot on the premises. You'd wreck any undertaking business. I'll admit that right now you look solemn enough to do credit to any first-class funeral. But it's your own funeral. You might forget yourself at somebody else's."

"But you went to work and led me on just a few minutes ago," wailed Mr. Cobb. "You just the same as promised me that I'd get her. You said you'd fix it for to-night. I thought you was a man of your word."

"Say, look here! You're talking to me as if I was a marriage bureau, satisfaction guaranteed. She was thinking last night about a husband, and you were fitting the bill in her case."

"But she doesn't give a hoot for that old stuffed sled stake!"

"Probably not. Just as much as said so. But she changed her mind overnight, Cobb, as a notional woman is apt to. We was reading poetry up to my house last night, and she was sentimental. To-day it came over her that 'business' doesn't rhyme with 'dove.' and she told me last evening that she was bound to hang onto the business, instead of sitting down and twiddling her thumbs at forty."

"I've watched him going to her house, night after night. Plug hat and his long-tailed coat! I've seen him through

the window, sitting in the parlor, scrubbing his old paws over each other, rolling up his eyes! Play-acting undertaking, that's what he was! Getting it into her mind that he was just the fellow for her business! If she marries him, she'll be the sorriest woman who ever buttered a biscuit! Cap'n Sproul, it's your duty to grab in and bring her to her senses!"

"Cobb, I'm starting out to live down a reputation I've got in this town—almost as bad a reputation as yours. It has been said that I'm sticking my nose into other folks' private business, especially courting scrapes. I'm done."

"But your word to me—"

"Was based on what she said. You have just had a fresh word, straight. Why, even that owl could understand! And if the way you're looking at me is any indication of the way you're feeling inside, you'd better take that stuffed hoodackus along with you when you leave. I take presents only from friends!"

"Yes, I *will* take it along," agreed Mr. Cobb, sticking the bird under his arm. "He wouldn't be appreciated here any more'n I have been."

That evening Mr. Cobb did some more of his spying outside the house of Widow Simmons. He was able to assure himself on certain matters, because the widow quite frankly took the neighborhood into her confidence by leaving all the shades up. She understood Scotaze tongues and wisely gave them facts instead of material for guesswork.

"Goram, it's just what I was sure of!" muttered Bill Alf. "Look at her! If she marries that old crowbar, it'll be a crime instead of a matter of business! She's so tired of him already that she's sitting there nigh gaping her head off!"

The soul of the rejected lover was cheered a bit by the spectacle of the yawning widow; he would have been

more distinctly cheered could he have heard what she said.

"How long the evenings are getting to be, Mr. Kragg!"

"Isn't it time for us to drop all the formalities, dear lady? You must not 'mister' me."

"I always called my first husband Mr. Simmons; I always referred to him as such to others. I don't think I can get used to any other way."

"I have never liked my own name. It sounds so hard! Why don't you call me Welly?"

"I really don't think I could grow to be so familiar, Mr. Kragg."

He blinked at her with astonishment.

"But we are going to be married, dear lady!"

"Yes, that is the arrangement. But I cannot change over all my habits on that account. I am quite frank with you, Mr. Kragg. I cannot feel toward you as I did toward Bill Alf. He—"

"There! There you go! You call me 'mister'! You call him Bill Alf!"

"I never could help calling him Bill Alf. He is so sort of sociable and jolly and all that. That's what you lack, Mr. Kragg—fun and jollity. I'll admit that Bill Alf is too much of a joker sometimes. But I do miss his fun. Sometimes I'm almost afraid I'm making a mistake by putting my business interests ahead of my inclinations."

"I can't say that I enjoy hearing you tell me that you're more in love with somebody else than you are with me," declared Mr. Kragg sourly.

"I don't say that I'm in love with Bill Alf. I don't think I was ever in love with anybody. But Bill Alf was such a relief! Most everybody else tires me." She patted her lips, restraining a yawn.

"I know it's pretty tame, just sitting here and talking." He gave the windows discontented glance. "When folks are courting, they ought to have the

shades down, that's my notion. Then you could sit on my knee."

"Why, Mr. Kragg! The very idea!" she gasped, her eyes flashing.

"But I ain't asking for anything except what is done when folks are courting," he insisted.

"Oh, I suppose you are well posted. You have had considerable experience in such matters," she returned quietly. "But I have my own ideas, too. All I wish for is that you could be funny and jolly and make me laugh. They do say that every laugh makes life longer."

"Well, if all the folks in this town were like that devilish Cobb," he told her in acrid tones, "there wouldn't be much business here in the undertaking line, if your say-so is correct. I want you to understand, my dear lady, that I can be funny and jolly, as well as somebody else."

"Why, I didn't know that!" she declared with real surprise.

"Any man can be funny when he is encouraged. And I can be a joker without making a fool of myself. That idiot of a bird stuffer is only a low-down clown!"

"I may like you real well if you can be jolly. Go ahead and make me laugh, Mr. Kragg!" She stifled another yawn.

"Well, here's something you can laugh at because it has made me laugh every time I think about it. It's how I worked off that tumblebug hoss onto Cobb."

He gave her the story, along with a detailed pedigree of the animal. She surveyed him soberly during the recital. When he cackled at the conclusion and slapped his leg, she did not smile.

"That might make fun for a crowd of horse jockeys in a stable, Mr. Kragg, but I don't understand it very well, except that it seems that you're really the one responsible for spoiling my new habit, instead of poor Bill Alf."

"Well," he retorted, "it helped to save

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you from a cheap fellow who wanted to marry you for your money. I deserve credit for that. Now you've got a government official who can do credit to you."

It was plain that the assurance did not provoke any radiant joy in her.

"If there's anything I dislike in a man, it's a domineering spirit that comes from a sense of too much importance. Love blinds a good many silly folks. But I am going into this partnership with you, Mr. Kragg, with my eyes wide open. I am noting all points. Today you showed something of a stingy spirit about those wedding cards. This evening you talked to me as if I were a flirty girl instead of a grown-up business woman. Just now you have been laughing about a mean trick you played on a neighbor."

"All is fair in love and war—that's what they say," he stated with considerable venom.

"But we are not dealing with either—not in this case!"

"Are you proposing to give me the mitten?"

"Why, certainly not, Mr. Kragg! I do not whiffle about in any such style. I have made up my mind. I was not mealy-mouthed when I talked with poor Bill Alf, was I? No! He understands. But I warn you that you'd better mind your eye or you'll make me change my mind. I don't think you'd better stay any longer this evening. You'd better go home and meditate until it's time to go to bed. When you come to eat your Thanksgiving dinner with me, to-morrow, I shall expect to find you in a different frame of mind and ready to become the kind of a man I want for a husband."

She rose and got his hat and coat for him.

The dismissed Mr. Kragg departed so hastily from the house that he gave Bill Alf no time for a get-away. The heartsick spy was compelled to crouch

down behind some shrubbery in the yard.

Kragg lingered at the gate with the air of a man who was not certain just what to do with himself. He growled in vengeful monotone. While he waited, a man came stamping along the sidewalk, whistling. Mr. Cobb knew it must be Blucher Kragg, the postmaster's brother, because Blucher, whether on the street or in his photographer's shop or anywhere else, was whistling when he wasn't eating—and he always whistled the same tune, "The Campbells Are Coming."

"Hullo, Well! Ain't ye leaving a mite early?"

The postmaster grunted. Then he blurted out some of his fears and his doubts.

"I reckoned I could figger wimmen pretty well, Bluch, but that one in there has got me guessing. Condemn it, she acts slippery, even if she has agreed to have me! You listen to what she has said!"

"Notional—yes, notional as blazes. I can see it," admitted Blucher, after he had assisted his meditations with a few whistled bars. "What you've got to do is get the upper hand. Nail her! Look here, Well, you and I have always understood each other, like hand in glove, and we both know *her!* If you marry her, she'll keep you dancing. You know it. And I'll bet a cooky that inside of the next two weeks, you'll get the flag. You can't keep up the pace to suit her."

"If I get through without cuffing her ears, I'll be lucky," admitted the fiancé.

"The world is full of wimmen, but all of 'em haven't got money. I know you wouldn't stand for her if it wasn't for the money. Now why not play it coming and going? If you can get her, all right. You'll know how to be boss. If you can't get her, cinch it so that you can grab off some of that twenty thousand by a breach-of-promise suit."

"I can get her on that now."

"But it needs to be cinched. I've got an idea. Come along down to my shop. I'll show you."

They went away, and Mr. Cobb rose from behind the bush and waited until the Kraggs had departed to the tune celebrating the arrival of the Campbells. Then he rang the bell of the Simmons' castle.

"I'd like to come in," he informed the widow when she opened the door. "I've got something important to tell you. It's a plot."

"You cannot come in, Mr. Cobb. It would not be proper. Why, just this moment my promised husband has left the house!"

"I know it. I saw him go. I saw him sitting in there. I heard—"

"So you have become a peeping Tom and an eavesdropper! I'm ashamed of you! A man who will do things like that will make up lies about innocent folks. I hate such a man. Good night!" The door almost bumped his eager nose.

However, Bill Alf's zeal was not checked by that rebuff. He pulled the bell knob persistently. But after a time the bell made no more sound, and he realized that the widow had muffled it. Furthermore, the lights in the house were extinguished.

The next forenoon, Thanksgiving Day, he called four times in the forenoon and was turned contemptuously from the door by the hired girl, who came hot-faced from her kitchen fire. Finally her temper became as hot as her face, and she threatened, on behalf of herself and her mistress, to call Constable Nute.

Then, observing from a distance, Bill Alf saw Mr. Kragg stalk into the house with the air of the assured and expected guest. He carried a big bundle.

After that, losing hope, Bill Alf went despondently back to his shop and voiced his apprehension to the stuffed folk of fur and feather who stared at him with their eyes of glass. In the

silent congregation was a skunk which he had mounted with protruding eyes and upstanding tail. He employed it summers as a fixture in his garden, and he had made it purposely so evil looking that it was guaranteed to give an invading hen palpitation of the heart.

"That's what you are, Kragg!" declared Bill Alf. "A low-down, thieving, miserable skunk! Here's what you deserve! Here's what I'd like to do to you!"

He kicked the skunk all over the shop and then mallywhacked it into small bits with a hatchet. After it had vicariously atoned for the sins of Wellington Kragg, Mr. Cobb threw it out of a back window.

The Widow Simmons, being a woman who prided herself on her capability, delegated to her hired girl only the minor operations in preparing the dinner that day.

"I shall have to ask you to sit and entertain yourself with the stereoscope pictures, Mr. Kragg," she told her



"And now the very final blessing, dear lady." He gently pulled her head upon his shoulder. "It will be a picture above the price of rubies!"

guest. "I've got to be in the kitchen, for I'm cooking dinner myself. I want you to see what kind of a wife you're getting."

Mr. Kragg, left to himself, untied his big bundle. There was a large camera with a folded tripod and other apparatus.

When, at last, the widow and her helper came bearing in the smoking dishes, Mr. Kragg explained why he had set a camera in one corner of the dining room.

"I borrowed it from Blucher, dear

lady. I want to have an everlasting souvenir of the best dinner ever set before me!"

The heart of the cook was touched by that degree of devotion.

"I never had such a nice compliment paid to me! I'm delighted! You have sentiment in you, after all, Mr. Kragg!"

"You will find me out as time goes on, dear lady. It is hard to judge one at first."

"It's such a pretty idea! It shows such appreciation! A woman loves to be appreciated."

Had the eyes of Bill Alf seen the smile she gave Mr. Kragg, the last, smoldering hope would have flickered into blackness in the breast of the lonely lover in the taxidermist shop.

When the covers were removed, a wonderful feast was exposed—the great turkey, browned to a turn, the nappies of odorous vegetables, the jellies, and the preserves! The hired girl gave the last touches and retired.

"You must hurry, Mr. Kragg, before anything gets cold," the hostess warned him.

"Yes, we will hurry, dear lady. Blucher has told me just how to do everything."

At that moment, the doorbell rang. A small boy gave a note into the hands of the widow when she hurried to answer.

I warn you again, Creeshy. There's a plot. He and his brother are in it. With love,
BILL ALF.

She tore up the note and threw the bits into the fireplace on her way back to the dining room. Thus have others in history refused to listen to the warnings of writings at the feast!

"And now, dear lady, for the thing which will make this day the happiest of my life. And I must have a picture of that happiness. As you have surmised so kindly, I am full of sentiment," purred the guest. "Will you grant me a very dear wish?"

"If you'll hurry up before everything cools off."

"Sit here close beside me at the table. You see, all I have to do is to pull this string. That takes the picture. It will be a blessed picture—ourselves—we two together and this wonderful dinner."

She sat down, blushing prettily. Flattery was having its full effect.

"And now the very final blessing, dear lady." He gently pulled her head upon his shoulder. "It will be a picture above the price of rubies!"

In eagerness to make sure, taking advantage of her surrender, he put his lips to her cheek and pulled the string with much force. Something went wrong, somehow. There was a muffled explosion, and the camera tipped forward. The air was filled with a powder which settled all over the outspread feast, sprinkling all the viands thickly.

The hostess screamed and leaped to her feet.

"Good land of mercy, what is it?"

"It—it's the flash-light powder," stammered the amateur. "But it didn't seem to flash. It—it blew up!"

"It's a plot! I have been warned of it! It is a plot."

Her accusation was launched so suddenly and so furiously, she menaced him so tempestuously with upraised fist, that he was not able to get control of himself. His countenance confessed his guilt to her woman's keen vision.

"You don't dare to deny that it's a plot! What are you trying to do? What does it mean?"

When he faltered a few words, she snatched a poker from the fireplace stand.

"Don't you dare to lie to me! You tell me the truth!"

"I—I took advice. I—I think it was poor. I—I—"

The hired girl was a frightened spectator from the doorway.

"Minnie," ordered the mistress,

breaking in on Mr. Kragg, "you run with all your might to Bill Alf's shop and bring him here! Run! I'll have you know, Mr. Kragg, that Bill Alf overheard you last night!"

She was vague because she had not allowed Mr. Cobb to relate what he had heard, but her vagueness was more effective than detailed allegations. It left the culprit guessing at just what Bill Alf *had* overheard. Mr. Kragg was guiltily conscious that he and his brother had said a great deal, one way and another.

"If you dare to stay here and face him, you're more brazen than I think you are! If you stay here, this village will see you kicked out of my house into the street! That will be nice for your standing—you *government* official, you!" There was bitter scorn in that sneer. "Bill Alf has good reason for wanting to kick you! If he has forgotten that reason, I'll remind him when he gets here!"

Mr. Kragg knew inflexibility when he saw it. There was present danger in that brandished poker; there was future danger to be apprehended when Mr. Cobb came, answering the summons.

Mr. Kragg picked up the camera and equipment and escaped.

Widow Simmons was conscious that she had never been so furiously angry in all her life and, when she had been left alone, she rather wondered at the intensity of her emotions; the fact that she had been apprised of some kind of a plot did not seem to be sufficient excuse for her feelings. Then her gaze fell on the outspread feast—and she understood!

That glorious dinner over which she had spent hours of preparation, thoughtful care, and hard work—what had happened to it? A sculptor seeing his marble smashed, a painter beholding his masterpiece slashed by vandal

hand, can hold no passion hotter than the rage of a housewife thus put upon!

With vibrating finger, she pointed at the noble turkey and "fixin's" when Bill Alf came rushing in.

"He said it was flash-light powder! Has it spoiled my dinner? Is it safe to eat it?"

"I don't exactly know because I never et any," confessed Mr. Cobb, fiddling contemplative finger under his nose. "But if you want my unbiased opinion, don't you touch tongue to a dish. Anything that comes from them Kraggs must be pizen!"

"It must be! And now what was that plot?"

"Getting evidence so that he could sue you for breach of promise and grab fist into your money." That attempt to take a picture helped along Mr. Cobb's other limited stock of information.

"Bill Alf, I have talked straight to you before. I'll talk straight now. But you understood my stand. I was thinking about business. I'm still going to continue to think about business. But I'm going to think of something else as well. I like you. I'm going to take you for my husband. But I'm bothered about my business."

"Why not sell it out and go in for millinery? I can help in millinery. It's right in my line of feathers and fur."

The widow went to Bill Alf and kissed him by way of thanks.

"That's the really sensible business for a woman to be in. I ought to have thought of it myself."

That afternoon another Thanksgiving dinner was cooked in the Widow Simmons' house. It was served for two in the evening. Mr. Kragg, sneaking past on the other side of the street, perceived something which was dolefully significant in his case.

All the window shades were drawn down.

Disciplining *the Kid*

By Bessie R. Hoover

Author of "Pa Flickinger's Folks," "Fathering a Sammie," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. A. FURMAN

A new story of Dave Flaxman and his daughter Elsa, by one
of the most lucid writers and keen observers of life we know.

WHAT do you call that?" demanded Dave Flaxman, as he stood ruddy and immaculate in his office one morning, gazing frowningly toward the front door, where Elsa, his eighteen-year-old daughter, was talking with a girl friend.

"Them is just girls," allowed the foreman of Flaxman's awning factory, a lean, scraggy individual, in dingy brown overalls, who bore the euphonious name of Job Brightup.

In their warm cloaks and smart caps, the two girls chattered in the doorway, oblivious of Dave Flaxman's impatience. And their pink cheeks, dark, dancing eyes, and flashing white teeth, as well as their whole silly, innocent conversation, was at once a joy and an irritation to Flaxman, while he waited for his daughter to bid her friend good-by and begin the day's work.

But the frown on his heavy face gradually changed to a helpless grin when Elsa finally kissed Margaret in farewell and then closed the door.

"Now come and kiss your daddy, and we'll start to work," said Flaxman, his stern mood melted by so much innocent gayety. "Hustle off your togs, kid. You're forty-five minutes late."

"If I'm that late, I haven't time to bother to kiss you," Elsa pertly retorted, hanging her cloak and cap on their accustomed peg.

A few weeks before, Dave Flaxman's stenographer, the valued Miss Sampson,

had resigned, and partly as a war-time economy and partly because he had always planned to have Elsa help him when she had graduated from high school, he had taken his daughter into his office, and he was now grappling with the result.

"Suit yourself about the kiss," allowed Dave stiffly, "but as long as you was passing 'em round, I saw no reason to leave me out."

"Oh, you don't count," lightly returned Elsa, seating herself before the typewriter.

"Whenever you're ready, miss, we'll go to work," said her father, taking a chair near her. "No hurry," he added dryly.

Vexed though he was, he looked at his little daughter, sitting straight and delicate before the machine, with secret pride. Elsa's nearly golden hair, her slight, rounded form, rose-leaf complexion, and blue eyes so like her mother's were a constant delight to him. But charming as Elsa appeared, she was often so impertinent, so heedless, and so self-sufficient that he longed to shake her. For she was, without his being aware of it, a dainty replica of himself. He spoke of his daughter familiarly as "the kid," and her growing beauty and quick intelligence were a constant surprise and delight to him.

"Messrs. Berry & Green," dictated Flaxman.

"Wait a jiff, dad. I'll just glance



The two girls chattered in the doorway, oblivious of Dave Flaxman's impatience.

through the mail first to see if there isn't a letter from Louis," cried Elsa blithely.

"Well, there ain't," shortly enlightened her father.

"You might have overlooked it, not being as interested in the young man as I am," returned Elsa, with a freedom of speech that would have shocked the faithful Miss Sampson.

"But I didn't. Since Louie Glade enlisted and went to Camp Custer, I've been as anxious to hear from him as you are. Now, begin: Messrs. Berry & Green, Dear Sirs——"

"No letter!" dolefully exclaimed the kid. "Papa, do you think Louis has forgotten me already?" and her blue eyes suddenly overflowed with tears.

"Louie Glade was smit on you a few

weeks ago when he went away, and if he's forgot you by this time, he ain't worth remembering. Now, you forget Louie for fifteen minutes and take this letter."

Elsa hurriedly placed her paper and her plump pink fingers settled above the keys ready for work, for she was able to type from dictation if her father spoke slowly. Then she broke out again:

"But, papa, suppose Louis is too sick to tell the nurse where to write. I do imagine the most dreadful things!"

"Messrs. Berry & Green, Dear Sirs," determinedly repeated Dave Flaxman. "Your letter giving me prices on extra strong blue-and-white canvas has been received, and I am now placing an order with you for——"

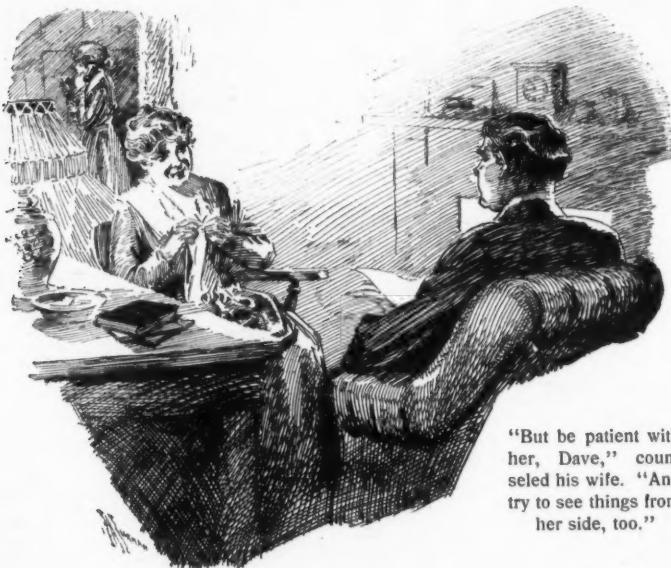
"Yes, but the blue-and-tan canvas is best."

"So it is," testily admitted her father. "But I got so hatched up waiting for you—that I dunno just what I do want now."

And, later, when she brought him the neatly typed pages to sign, Dave was equally divided between admiration for her work and impatience at her shortcomings. For, as he had told his wife, Elsa was an awfully uneven kid. Some

"I am gruff," proudly grinned Dave. "That's what has got me along in this world. My folks dying when I was a mere lad, I just come up gruff. But I done a lot of thinking, too. I am self-made, and whatever I have wanted, I have went after. Once I was a hoodlum, and now, kid—listen to this—I am talked of for—mayor!"

That evening, in an easy-chair before the open fire, sat Dave Flaxman, the



"But be patient with her, Dave," counseled his wife. "And try to see things from her side, too."

things she did even better than Miss Sampson, and other things she seemed almost unable to do as he directed. And she always wanted her letters to "sound right," no matter what their contents.

"Type this again," he ordered, handing back a letter, "and cut off the last two lines. They don't mean nothin'. You want to put a society polish on even the awning business, and it can't be did—not with me."

"But, papa, ending the letter so abruptly would sound gruff."

picture of a contented business man enjoying his home circle. Everything was as neat and pretty and comfortable as if Flaxman, who had earned it all, had never been a neglected waif, sleeping nights under a grocer's counter like a cat, as he was fond of recalling.

Mrs. Mary Flaxman, sitting near the shaded lamp, was knitting on coarse gray yarn. Her chestnut hair waved softly back from a smooth forehead, and the broad white collar on her simple blue dress gave her a girlish charm.

But her face was womanly and thoughtful. For living twenty years with egotistical Dave Flaxman had developed not only a resisting power equal to his own, but also a wise diplomacy.

Elsa was standing at the telephone, saying to her friend Margaret:

"I'd love to go with you to-morrow morning, if I wasn't helping my daddy. But you know I'm in the office."

"It sounds good to hear Elsa saying that she is helping her daddy," Mary Flaxman told her husband with a pleased smile, for it had taken considerable pressure to induce Elsa to do office work.

"It sounds better than it is," returned Dave dryly. "Elsa's help is like some charity—in spots."

"But be patient with her, Dave," counseled his wife, as their daughter continued her chatter at the telephone. "And try to see things from her side, too."

"But she's so heedless. I would rather train a kitten to haul a cart than the kid to do business. Though sometimes, if she takes a notion, she can beat Miss Sampson, and that's saying a good deal."

"Tell her plainly what you want done, and then be patient and hold her to it," instructed Mary Flaxman.

"Me! I ain't got no time to be patient! I'm a business man. I never needed any patience with Miss Sampson."

"No, Dave, for Miss Sampson had patience with you," said his wife plainly. "And, really, I wish at times that you had kept Miss Sampson."

"Huh! So do I! But Elsa is easier to look at, and the hands all like her, too."

"That shows she has tact—if the workmen like her."

"Tack nothin'!" exclaimed Dave. "It's just her blamed society manner. Her saying, 'Good morning, Mr.

Brightup,' to Job has set him up till he's took to shaving regular."

"Anyway, it does no harm for Elsa to be polite."

"No-o, but it seems finicking to smear society ways over everything. I suppose dancing school's to blame for some of that. I do want our kid to be civil to folks, but no need to overdo it. If it wasn't war times, so I ought to save all I can, I would offer Miss Sampson any old price to come back. There was no foolishness about Abby Sampson," sighed her former employer.

"But, Dave, Miss Sampson is forty-five years old, and taught school eleven years before she took up office work. Isn't Elsa doing a little better all the time?"

"In some ways. But you can't never tell where she will break out, she's so uneven. She can type a good letter—if she would leave off the frills. And she's neat, but I lay that on to you, Mame, always being so blamed neat yourself," he added, as if neatness were a doubtful virtue.

"But think how young she is, and a girl, too."

"Yes, she is a girl," grimly echoed Dave. "No mere man or boy could mix up things the way she does—business, society, little tags of her own thoughts, Margaret, no end to Louie, and so many yards of canvas, all in one breath. And yet she takes on some things about the business awful quick. She's a better judge of awning cloth this minute than I be. No traveling man can fool her with his samples. But what Elsa needs is discipline, and I'm going to give her more of it. It's the only way. If she wasn't my daughter, I'd have discharged her long ago."

"You would?" indignantly demanded the sharp kid, suddenly confronting her father, for she had been listening as well as telephoning.

"Sure! And you can thank your

'lucky stars,' kid, that you work for your daddy. Otherwise, you wouldn't work for any one long, see?"

"I will not work—for you—another day!" heatedly cried Elsa. "You're mean to tell my mamma things about me, when I try so hard to type your old letters!" and she indignantly left the room.

"A kid with as much spunk as that ought to be shaped into decent office help," complacently grinned Dave, amused at her anger. "She needs the same kind of discipline my work hands get. What do you suppose she's up to now?"

"I suppose Elsa's crying because she can't please you," said Mary Flaxman.

"Rest easy, Mame. More likely she's planning some mischief to spring on me to-morrow. That darned kid is getting on my nerves. Oh, well, I suppose most young ones do get on their folkses nerves some time or other."

"I remember, Dave, before we were married, when you took me for a drive behind a fast horse, how gentle you were with the horse."

"Firefly, you mean. I had to be gentle, she was so highlifed," recalled Dave, who loved horses. "But what put that into your head?"

"Elsa is highlifed, too. If you would only be more gentle with her!"

"There you go again, Mame! You never can leave a subject alone! I see enough of the kid all day long—with-out having her dished up at home, too. But if you think I'm going to begin being gentle—with my own kid—when she needs disciplining, you're 'way off."

"Yet you can be gentle, Dave, if you want to," she gravely urged.

Flaxman smiled good-naturedly at his wife.

"Mary, if I was an angel from heaven with a halo a mile high, you'd still see something in me to improve. But as far as our kid is concerned, I have been too gentle with her. To-

morrow I'm going to start in and discipline Elsa. My mind's made up."

Mary Flaxman did not reply; she only looked wistfully at him, and in her steadfast blue eyes, Dave read:

"Be gentle and patient. She is so young."

The next morning, Dave Flaxman, pleasantly aware that he was going to discipline the kid, sat looking over the letters at his desk when Elsa came in. She did not take off her cloak and cap as usual, but, solemnly approaching him, said with a very serious face:

"As long as I can't give satisfaction, I resign my position."

"What!" shouted Flaxman, astonished at the turn of affairs. "Mebbe you think you've resigned," he commented in the grimly sarcastic tone his men feared. "But do you know who I am?"

"You are—my father," faltered the girl.

"Exactly!" thundered Dave. "Well, that's a position I ain't resigned! And I need help! You see this pile of unanswered letters? You'll keep your position till I tell you to give it up. Do you get me?"

Elsa took off her cloak and cap and hung them up, and by that time, having gathered strength to meet her father's eye, she said steadily:

"But I work under protest, for you haven't treated me like a lady."

"Cut away under protest then," advised Dave. "We'll answer Marks, Brown & Co.'s letter first."

"What next, sir?" inquired the factory foreman, Job Brightup, who had been a pained spectator to this unpleasant scene. And after Dave Flaxman had given him the necessary instructions, Elsa said forlornly: "Good morning, Mr. Brightup," while two large tears rolled unchecked down her cheeks.

"Mornin', Miss Elsa," and though Job stood too much in fear of his autocratic employer to give her any verbal

sympathy, his scraggy face was a veritable bog of commiseration.

All day Elsa worked nervously. Dave had mastered her, but he did not feel proud of his conquest. Toward evening, as she was taking an order over the telephone, her voice grew unpleasantly shrill, and she finally hung up the receiver with a resentful click.

"Now what's wrong?" demanded her father harshly, on the outlook for insubordination.

"Horrid old thing! It was Mrs. Geddis. She was placing a thirty-five-dollar order for awnings for her house when she suddenly flared up!" explained the trembling kid.

Mere words could not express Dave Flaxman's anger, for Elsa had offended one of the richest women in town, and a customer of several years' standing. And though he immediately telephoned Mrs. Geddis and tried to smooth things over, she coldly, but politely refused him the order, adding that he need expect none in the future.

"I wouldn't want to sell to her," commented Elsa. "She kept misunderstanding me right along."

"Mrs. Geddis is a little deaf. There's where the trouble began—that, and your way of handling her. This is one time when your blamed society polish might have helped you out, if you'd been bright enough to see it. But Mrs. Geddis will never place another order. She's mad, she is!"

"Everything I do is wrong," observed Elsa sullenly.

"Stop, miss!" commanded Dave Flaxman. "What's that kiss for?" his gruff tone concealing the delight that the unsolicited caress had given him.



"It certainly is," agreed her father. "And I don't want you to work for me any more. I wisht to land I had let you go home this morning! I'd have been thirty-five dollars ahead now. I don't know what good you are in this office, unless it is to look pretty—and make trouble. Now, Elsa, don't talk back, but go home to your mother," he concluded gloomily.

But after she had dressed for the street, she spoke eagerly:

"Papa, I'll take back everything I said about giving up my position this morning. I'll swallow—my protest—and stay!"

"If you hadn't lost Mrs. Geddis' order, I might have kept you. But go home. You can still be a social butterfly, which is about all you are good for." But the hurt look in his daughter's blue eyes was so difficult to meet that he said less severely: "I was mistaken in you. I thought you would develop some sense. But mebbe a girl like you ain't got no business sense to develop—though you have took holt of some

parts of my work better even than Miss Sampson." He felt forced to give her this scrap of comfort, because he considered himself a just man. "I don't know where I can get another office girl at a minute's notice. But papa's not angry with you any more, Elsa," speaking of himself in the third person as if she were still a little child. "Papa's merely in a hole!"

"Mamma will feel awful," remarked the kid, as she started to go, perhaps with the forlorn hope of softening her father.

"I know she will," sorrowfully responded Dave. "But you'd oughter thought of the consequences before you got so tonguey with Mrs. Geddis."

The next day, Dave Flaxman dreaded to go to his office, but when he reached it, he found Elsa there before him, wearing her best blue velvet cloak and pretty silk hat. She was not working, but appeared to be merely waiting for him in the chair reserved for visitors.

Dave, coolly ignoring his daughter's presence, seated himself at his desk. And there before his eyes, neatly typed, lay an order for thirty-five dollars' worth of awnings for Mrs. Geddis!

"Has the heavens fell?" demanded Dave Flaxman, pushing back his hat and staring at the paper.

"Mrs. Geddis made one change in her order," solemnly announced the kid, without looking at her father. "She wanted the tan-and-blue cloth when I explained how much better it was."

"Telephoned in this morning, did she?" Flaxman asked affably.

"No, sir," said his daughter, her flushed, flowerlike face very serious.

"What! Old Lady Geddis been here? Why, she never sets foot in any store in town!"

"But listen! I took the samples and called on her half an hour ago."

"Without asking your papa? That wasn't right at all, you fool kid!" But his voice was jocose.

"Because I lost the order, I went to see her this morning. At first she was positively frosty. But I told her just how it was—that I was new to the work and that I was nervous yesterday, anyway, and that my daddy was having an awful time to teach me to do it right, and that I was trying to help out because it was war times, while Louis was in Camp Custer."

"I'll bet you didn't leave Louis out!" put in Dave.

"And Mrs. Geddis ended by giving me the order, and she said: 'You dear little thing, doing your bit, too!' And then—"

"I always knewed Mrs. Geddis was a real lady!" praised Dave.

"And then she invited my mamma and me to come to her home Thursdays for tea and bring our knitting. All the nicest ladies go there." And suddenly Elsa bent over her father and lightly kissed his cheek.

"Here, stop, miss!" commanded Dave Flaxman. "What's that kiss for?" his gruff tone concealing the delight that this unsolicited caress had given him.

"It's 'cause I'm saying good-by to the office for good. I'm going home to my mother now."

He might have let her go, much as he wished her to stay—and needed her, too—for that would have been disciplining her, according to his harsh code, but as she spoke of her mother, Mary Flaxman's words came back to him:

"Be gentle, Dave, and patient. She's so young!"

So he said shortly, not being master of his voice as more polished men are:

"Hang up your togs, kid, and we'll type this list. I'm giving you another trial."

And as happy Elsa slipped in front of her machine, he began reading in a stolid, monotonous tone, but with a singularly light heart:

"Seventeen yards extra strong twilled canvas, eighty-nine cents a yard."

The Toll of the Road

By Marion Hill

Author of "The Great Perhaps," "Bridging a Distance," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

The conclusion of Marion Hill's last serial—a story of the stage and of love and ambition, told with wonderful insight and vividness. How could it have ended in any other way?

CHAPTER XV.

R ELEGATED to my own affairs, I had time to think over what Tommie Maguire had said in regard to my playing "hobs" with Terry. I could not exactly define "hobs," yet had not a doubt in the world but what I was playing it, for it had not a nice sound. And in a few days the evil game—whatever it was—came to a critical point.

That crisis occurred during a slight break in the monotony of our traveling existence. We were still in Texas, and the railroad company had switched our car to a siding on the prairie, leaving us there to be picked up much later by a fast freight. It was great fun to own a whole prairie, a whole car, and a whole little shack of a station, all by ourselves. What was greater fun was the opportunity of walking around in the country without admiring eyes to spy on us. Best of all, we did not have to catch a train; the train had to catch us.

Unhampered by the restrictions of society, we all hied ourselves to our various amusements. Lorimer filled his arms with manuscripts and took possession of a signal house a little way up the track, turning it into an editorial sanctum. Old Mr. Vivian stretched himself out at length upon the cushioned seat of the men's lavatory in the

Pullman car, and snoozed. San Vallega hugged his violin and took a teetering stroll upon the rail of the track, occasionally stopping to play certain notes that he heard, given out by the telegraph wires above his head. Pettie and the Elfin Dove played pinochle on the floor of the little station. I don't know what the rest did.

As for me, I began by climbing a small tree—for the unlimbering of my soul—walked a trestle over and back, played jackstones with nine pebbles, and rejoiced exceedingly upon finding out that I could perform even "horses in the stable" without missing; in fact, I went right back to nine years of age. Remembering a coveted something which Stroudstown's respectability had always forbidden me at that time of life—namely, swinging down the aisle of a Pullman coach, using the backs of the seats as propellers—I stole into the empty car and treated myself to a performance, being brought to a halt by hearing Fernanda Mellis say in a half-envious, half-sad way:

"What a child you are, Miss Hal-lam!"

She was all alone in the grandeur of her drawing-room compartment, and looked anything but a child herself, for the unfiltered light of the sun shone mercilessly upon her, accentuating the subtle marks of the years.

This story began in the April number of SMITH'S.

I smiled more or less vacantly, not knowing what else to do; a star is a star, whether on a siding or not.

"Come in here and talk to me," was her next speech.

"Certainly," I said with a haggard sort of gayety, not having the ghost of a thing to talk about; but in I went, and had the satisfaction of finding out that she really wanted to talk herself, and was willing and able to do it all.

"Be glad of your youth," she began. "It will stand you in better stead than intelligence."

With anybody else, I would have broken in to lay claim to intelligence, too, but one dared not be flippant with Fernanda Mellis. One doesn't say, "Nice pussy!" to a lioness. And this woman, with her magnificent tawny head of hair and topaz-colored eyes that were watchful without being stealthy, still reminded me of a regal animal in captivity, lifted above the staring populace by disdain of it. Treat a tiger like a pussy, and you'll get done to death by its paw.

"Be glad of your youth while you have your profession," she went on, in gentle bitterness, "and while you have your youth, be glad of your profession; for in no other profession but ours does inexperience command the highest positions."

"And does it?" I asked timidly. If so, that was cheering news for me.

"Does it not?" she counterdemanded quickly. "Take your own case. Two months ago, you had never stepped upon the stage; to-day, you are sharing the press notices with us; to-morrow, you will be in my place."

"Why, where are you going?" I asked, veritably on the verge of collapse.

After glimmering at me haughtily under lowered lids, she discovered even with half an eye that I was sincere and broke into her wonderful laugh. A person could not call that laugh arti-

ficial, for by now it was second nature, but its exquisite modulations showed what genius could do, even to the vocal cords.

"You frank simpleton!" she said kindly. "I was speaking in parables. The time may not be to-morrow, or the person you, but eventually I go, and a new face supplants mine in the playgoer's favor. No other art is treated with such cruelty. The painter grows honors with his gray hairs. The poet mellows with age, and sounds then his richest note. The musician's power expands as his experiences gather. And not till a statesman passes his half-century mark does he grip the confidence of his constituents. But how about the actor, the actress? The very moment that she reaches her highest point, having gained it only by constant study and heroic sacrifices, she is dashed downward into poverty and oblivion by a chance dimple in the cheek of an uneducated shopgirl!"

I crossed and recrossed my feet quite miserably, being conscious of the fact that I, too, liked to see a young person playing a young part and never could take the faintest interest in the sentimental emotions of a woman of forty. I did not want her to be in poverty, but considered oblivion the most comfortable place for her.

"The theater is the modern temple of Moloch, making victims of its petted votaries," she mused on, "wreathing them with garlands and inspiring them with wine, only to feed them to its insatiable flame, its horribly eager fires which lick up the beauties of youth!"

"If you're afraid of the fire, why do you stay?" I faltered, meaning more than I dared to express.

"Why does a mother stay beside her dying child, a captain by his doomed ship?" she asked, with more allegory than point.

"What made you go on the stage in the first place, Miss Mellis?" I asked,

less out of curiosity than to give her something to proceed with.

But she had evidently finished, for she merely asked silencingly:

"Why did you?"

This question, though, most naturally brought Maurice Lorrimer to the minds of both of us; so I was not surprised to have her remark presently:

"I wonder where Lorry is?"

"Writing in a kind of a sentry box up the track," I responded promptly.

"The heart of a friend is the one faithful quality in the universe," she said restlessly. It seemed to me that the sentiment should have brought her greater peace. "While we live in the thoughts of those who love us and whom we love, we are eternally young. Time is powerless against love. Miss Hallam, do you mind asking Mr. Lorrimer to come to me? I want to go over a piece of business with him."

With a murmur of compliance, I rose at once and left her, wondering what she wanted me to understand by her last speech. This wonderment was of an intermittent quality, for I was wondering, too, why railroad ties are always set too close together or too far apart to make really nice walking; I was traveling them at the time as the most direct route to the sanctum.

Poor Miss Mellis! I was sorry for her, and sorry for them all. Not a soul of them seemed truly happy in the acting life, yet not a soul would voluntarily leave it. What mystery made them hold to it? And what became of the rest of their stories? I was thirsting for a bit of completion, eager to know what really happened after all the years of endeavor, but there was no one to tell me. It is a saying that one never sees a dead mule, and who ever sees a really retired actor? Even the very oldest all seem to be waiting for their next part.

Across the prairie a wind was blowing, a strong wind that moved nothing

in sight chiefly because there was nothing to be moved. The invisible strength of it had a mystic effect, reminding one of the wind of destiny which never can be seen, but which blows one along at a great rate, whether or no. Let me think these thoughts while in Texas, for Stroudstown wouldn't stand for them a minute. In Stroudstown, a person who "mooned" about destiny would be adjudged "wrong in her head."

Here I tapped timidly on Lorrimer's sentry box and was invited to "come in." But when I opened the door, with the intention of giving the message and disappearing, the wind flurried his manuscript and his temper, and he quite yelled:

"Come in and shut the door, or go out and shut the door, but shut the door!"

Polonius was scurrying round and round his neck like a fur boa endowed with life. I entered the funny cupboard and obediently closed the plank door.

"It is my comrade!" beamed Lorrimer, pacified, looking wonderfully big and handsome, seen thus at close range. The beneficent rage of composition was in his eyes, and a flush of literary victory bronzed his cheek. No wonder the deep cleft in his chin cut corresponding gashes in feminine hearts, for it was a positive beauty that Apollo himself might have been glad to own. "Sit you down, little comrade." He put Polonius on the window ledge; then motioned me to take possession of part of the watchman's bench.

"I'm not going to stay," I announced, truthfully untruthful. "I only came to say that Miss Mellis wants to see you."

I nearly said, "wants to rest on the one faithful quality in the universe—the heart of a friend."

"Let her want," he responded darkly. "I might have known you would never come near me of your own volition."

"Why not?" I asked, aiming to be nonchalant and natural.

"It is not you who should ask that question, but I, so I ask it: 'Why not?' Ever since the day we first met, I have •felt your opposition to me!"

"Oh, you can't have done that," I said nervously, "for I haven't been opposed to you."

"You have! You have refused to take my hand unnecessarily!"

"I don't see the use of doing anything unnecessarily, Mr. Lorrimer."

"You have refused to call me 'Lorry.'"

"I haven't known you long enough."

"You have refused to rest in my arms when tired!"

"Mr. Lorrimer!"

"I can't stop to pick my words. I only know that you insult me daily by your avoidance of me. The remembrance of it comes between me and my work, between me and my peace of mind, between me and my sleep. I demand the reason."

"I don't know of any," I faltered.

He had hurled the words at me with stunning force.

"Can it be because you love me, comrade?" he asked, gently turning from the warrior into the wooer.

I could not step back to free myself from the bewildering influence of him, for there was not room. When I could no longer bear his glance, I looked up, only to see the beady eyes of Polonius boring warily into mine. The sentry box was all eyes and no air.

"And I love *you*, comrade," went on Lorrimer, as if in reply to some statement of mine.

He took my hands and drew me down beside him, holding me close to him.

"The conflict is all over?" he asked presently.

"Yes," I answered, in a dream.

And so it was. Peace such as I had never felt before was mine at that moment.

"You will be my comrade for all time?"

"If you wish it."

"I wish it. So kiss me, comrade." And I kissed him.

That kiss was a key to all the problems of life, and I saw at last that Love was the master builder of homes, capable of turning huts into palaces and jails into castles. If Maurice Lorrimer should imprison me in a home no larger than the tiny signal house in which we then sat, I could be happy. It is said that the human mind is structurally incapable of entertaining two thoughts at the one time; so I was too filled with happiness to remember that that very happiness was black treachery to Terry. The transports of affection are really too grand and too terrible to describe. I simply could not be bothered with thoughts of Terry and my broken faith; I was too busy listening to Lorrimer.

"By showing your heart to me today, comrade, you have blessed not only me, but others. Without love, no man can write, act, produce, live. From this moment, my work will bear witness to the fact that I have gained in power by reason of your confidence and trust in me. Why else did God create two sexes unless to prove that neither is complete without the other? Man is the harp, and woman plays upon him, making either music or discord, symphony or ragtime, according to his nature and hers. Play upon me, comrade, that the world may bless us both!"

A feeling of divine responsibility descended upon me. Making no answer aloud, I prayed that I might live up to his hope of me. Before long, he began to read me portions of what he had been writing that day, inviting me to criticize; but I could find no flaw in it. And I think this pleased him as much as if I had really aided him. As for me, I was content but to number and arrange the pages. The fact of having been immediately made a partaker of his labors subtly pleased me. The quick sweet-



He took my hands and drew me down beside him, holding me close to him. "The conflict is all over?" he asked.

ness of his smile, when my hand accidentally touched his, was the very refinement of what is vulgarly termed "love-making." I felt elatedly in tune with the universe.

"How can you love a weasel?" I asked, not apropos of myself, but of Polonius, who was ubiquitously appearing in half a dozen places at the same time.

"By remembering that it *is* a weasel," he answered promptly. "If I insisted upon expecting it to turn out a gazelle, I should merely be arranging to have its weasel nature a future disappointment to me. Human alliances turn out wrong because of willful blindness. A man and a woman marry—he pretends she is an angel, she pretends he is a

god; they are wrecked upon the rock of their own conceit. Comrade, practice the learning of truth. Love Polonius."

He put the snaky beast into my hands, and Polonius immediately bit me.

"You knew that a weasel earned his living by his teeth and not by philanthropy," remarked Lorrimer, tenderly taking back his pet. "But suck your finger, comrade. Never depend upon moral axioms to counteract blood poison."

I silently did as bidden, wondering where my voice and brains had gone. Lorrimer never seemed to notice my dumbness, but talked on.

"Love, when it reaches the stage of

expression, is a wonderful beautifier," he remarked, looking hard at me. "I think I can make something of you yet, comrade. In my mind's eye, I see the announcement: 'Maurice Lorrimer presents Gertrude Hallam in'—perhaps 'Magda.' How does 'Magda' strike you?"

"I never heard of it," was my ashamed confession.

Lorrimer prepared to explode, but undoubtedly remembered in time that explosions ought to be cut out between us.

"You have much to learn," he said sternly, "and you have come to the right teacher. There is one thing in your favor, and that is that you *know* you are crude material. Is that that devil of an engine?"

It was, and it was tooting for us at a tremendous rate. Grabbing papers and Polonius, we hurried from the sentry box and boarded the train, I, for one, being thankful of the chance to get into a corner by myself, in order to think things over.

While the train jogged us onward to our destination, I sat trying to concoct a letter to Terry. Despairing of ever being able to present my action to him in any but a despicable light, I wearily concluded that I had better be brief than profuse, and had half an idea of writing simply, "Release me from our engagement, for I am not fit to marry you." But I was afraid Terry might take "not fit" to mean that I had gotten drunk, or something awful like that. The queer part of the whole thing was that I was unable to feel myself a culprit, being too frenziedly happy. To be Lorrimer's wife realized to the full all my aspirations of a "career," whether he made a cook out of me or a star. Moreover, I could not reach Terry by mail for several weeks, try though I might, for he was off on a trip. So why quarrel with content till the time was ripe?

That night I acted better than ever before, winning applause even from the company, which is the rarest applause there is, and counts the most. When in the presence of the others, Lorrimer was his usual self to me, but he took occasion to draw me aside and say:

"I willed you full of my power tonight."

"Why, that was very good of you," I murmured.

Perhaps he had. I certainly was thinking of him every minute and trying to do my best for his sake.

And I was very grateful to him for his reticence before the others. Lorrimer might scorn to mention Terry to me, but at any rate he knew enough to give me time to break one engagement before announcing another.

And so the days slipped by till Christmas was nearly with us. Christmas week was remarkable chiefly for the reason that we played on half salary, the idea being that the public was too impoverished buying presents to attend theaters.

"Entirely overlooking the important fact that *we* have to pay full rates at hotels and for sleepers!" ejaculated Walter Vivian.

"I suggest that we give only half a performance," smiled Dick Derry, endeavoring to play the rare rôle of pacificator.

"The sanity of my own remark demanded a like sanity of reply or none at all, sir!" raved the old gentleman.

No wonder he was testy; Christmas on the road is something too heart-breaking for words. To see the stores filled with pretty things that we were too poor to buy, to see postmen staggering along with letters that were not for us, to smell Christmas greens and want to cry instead of wanting to laugh, turned us all into "bears with sore backs," as Pettie choicely put it.

The weather was not cold enough, either. We were still touring the South-

west, and though we saw snow, the lovely white stuff never stayed long on the ground.

"Christmas without snow is like punch without a stick in it," pensively and poetically announced Miss Dove.

Upon Ursula Frede, the pale little "Simple Mug," a special dreariness seemed to fall, and after the Christmas Eve performance, she looked so tired and lonely that I said:

"Come into my room and let's exchange sobs before we go to bed."

"I'll be very glad to, Miss Hallam," she said; then felt it necessary to disentangle her own meaning by murmuring, "Not glad to 'exchange sobs,' you know, but to—"

She trailed mildly off into one of her vacant silences, so I hooked her arm in mine and trotted her briskly through the gusty night to our hotel, a very decent one, with fine suites of rooms.

Hotels hate to give "showgirls" separate rooms, trying to make them double up if possible. But we always stood out nobly for a room apiece and got it. To-night Ursula's apartment was on one side of mine and Miss Maguire's on the other, with doors between—presumably locked.

"Sit down and make yourself miserable," I said to Ursula, shoving her into a spacious rocker. Then I jumped into the comforts of a kimono and house slippers.

"Oh, I'm not miserable," she said, leaning back in the chair and smiling at me to prove her assertion. "But Christmas has so often been a tragic day in our family calendar that each time it comes around, I find myself wondering what's going to happen next."

In the middle of this speech, we heard Tommie Maguire rustle humming through the corridor and swirl into her own room, shutting the door with her customary slam. After that, there was silence. The hotel was a solidly built

one, so that the occupants of one room were not likely to be disturbed by the occupants of another.

"It wasn't like her not to speak as she went past," murmured Ursula.

Nor was it. Miss Maguire was built on an annoyingly communicative pattern, and was apter than not to call out, "I beat you to it, you owls!" when passing a lighted transom.

"What were the tragedies, Ursula?" I asked, taking the talk back to Christmas Day.

"When I was about eight, my mother died on Christmas, and two years afterward, my father followed her. You see, I connect Christmas Day with some one lying dead."

"That's morbid and unhealthy," I tutored severely, for she had given me the creeps. "Ursula, what play is *Magda* in?"

"In 'Magda.' "

"Well, tell me about it."

This Ursula obediently did, making the long, rambling mess of it that people usually make of the story of a play; still, she gave me some idea of the character, and I did not think much of it. Of course a woman *might* grow strong through sin, but I felt sure that she could grow a great deal stronger by never leaving off being good. But relating the play had taken Ursula out of herself, and had brightened her a bit.

"Now run off to bed," I yawned.

"Yes, I'd better," she answered, rising gently. "But first I'll go see what Tommie's up to. Maybe I can get in this way."

In the noiseless fashion natural to her, Ursula tried the handle of the communicating door. It yielded, and she opened it a crack. Then she softly shut the door again and went back to the chair from which she had just risen, dropping into it like a person who had fainted. But her eyes were staring, wide open.

"What on earth is the matter?" I asked.

She started to speak, but was trembling so and shivering so that no sound would come from her.

"For goodness' sake, say something!" I pleaded.

"They did not see me."

"They?"

"She has a man in there with her."

"Well, suppose she has," I granted tentatively. After my own little midnight séance with Lorrimer, I was cured of the idea of connecting evil with an evening caller.

"She has her arms around his neck, and he is twining her hair around his finger. He kissed her."

Shudders kept shaking Ursula.

"You certainly know her too well to be surprised," I finally said.

"But it is Jarvis Pettie."

"Let's talk of something else."

"I am his wife."

"Ursula!"

"We were married six years ago, when I was about seventeen." She was talking unemotionally, like a hypnotized person repeating given sentences.

"You and Jarvis Pettie man and wife for six years!"

"He tired of me after the first year. That's five years too soon, you see."

"Ursula, try to pull yourself together, dear," I said, putting a glass of water to her lips.

She quietly pushed it away without drinking, saying:

"Actors seldom stay married to the same person for more than six years."

"Why, nobody would ever have dreamed that Jarvis Pettie was your husband!"

"Don't speak it too loudly, Miss Hallam. He never would let me tell. No one knows it but you. It would hurt his popularity if it got around that he was a married man and I a married woman. Very few managers will engage a married pair, for they take up

each other's quarrels, and if one gets huffy and leaves, the other leaves. Why, even Lorry and *his* wife know better than to try to be in the same company together."

"Is Maurice Lorrimer married?" I asked, stunned into a quiet resembling hers, though surely the thing was not so; there was a mistake somewhere.

"Didn't you know Lorry had married again?"

"Again?"

"This is his third. She's quite nice and clever, and he's very fond of her."

Ursula went on talking of her own sorrow, but I did not hear it. I sat down at the foot of my bed and leaned my head on its railing, thinking, thinking, lost in the depths of a despairing disillusionment that was all the more horrible for having its distinctly grotesque side. For had I not paved the way for it by being a gullible, sentimental fool? Had Lorrimer himself ever said one word about engagement or marriage? Were not his speeches to me the high-flown counterpart of his usual speeches to all women? To be his "comrade for life" meant to him that I should be complacently companionable when he happened to want it—no more. His artist's craving for universal approbation had been piqued by my outward indifference to him, and he therefore had worked with especial diligence to conquer me, to enlist me openly on his own side, to feel proprietorship in my moods. That was all. For him, custom had long since robbed a kiss of its sacramental quality, rendering it no more a symbol of love or of passion, but simply one of the compliments that a man feels bound to bestow upon a sufficiently pretty girl when she is sufficiently compliant. The rest I had fabricated out of my own love for him. For I loved him! I loved him! There was no getting away from that terrible truth. And he liked me much; of that I was also sure. And the kiss that he

had so carelessly given me would still mean happiness when I should remember it—as when should I not?—for it had aroused a soul that before had been but half awake to its capabilities and duties. The only thing for me to do was to hide my farcical hurt from the world.

I raised my head from the bed railing and forced myself to listen to Ursula.

CHAPTER XVI.

"He grew tired of me because I wanted a home," she was saying. Leaning back in the chair, her hands folded limply in her lap, she still talked as if parroting a mesmerist. But her eyes held the passive anguish seen in those of a dying animal. "Oh, Miss Hallam, I have never wanted to travel and act! I have only wanted to have a home with my own tablecloths and knives and forks, and a small garden where I could grow some flowers. And I wanted to have some children—a boy first and then two little girls. And I could have had them by now, but he wouldn't let me. He has made me a murderer in the sight of God, and I'm afraid to say my prayers any more."

"But, Ursula, you mustn't be! Kneel down to-night and beg for peace!"

"I have no right, Miss Hallam; for since I've been on the stage, I have had other gods but Him. I've bowed down to idols, I've taken His holy Name in vain, I've profaned the Sabbath Day, I've not honored my father and mother, I've coveted my neighbor's house—I've broken all the Commandments except the seventh, and maybe I've broken even that, for isn't it adultery to live with a man and have no children? Oh, Miss Hallam, how I have cried over my little unborn babies!"

"Dear Ursula, you're trembling so! I'm afraid you'll make yourself ill. Won't you try to go to sleep?"

"I have a box I call my 'hope chest'

—that's what it was in the beginning—and in it are a dozen table napkins hemmed by hand, and six knives and forks and spoons, and four towels with the initial P on them, and two pretty cups and saucers, and a dear little doll. I take them with me everywhere, but I might as well throw them away now."

"Things are never as bad as they seem, Ursula," I stammered, conscious of the weakness of the attempted consolation, because, when it comes to suffering about them, "seem" is no better than "are."

"Miss Hallam, once a man's love goes, you can't ever get it back again. All you can get from him is tolerance or pity; and neither of those things last. I'll have to keep on acting till I wear out and die, and I think that will be soon." *

"Why don't you go back to your people?"

"I have no people. I have only a brother, and he has a family and is not well off. He doesn't write to me."

"Didn't he like your getting married?"

"He doesn't know about it. Didn't I tell you that nobody knows? I was very young when it happened, and so was Jarvis. He was nicer then. We went to a justice of the peace in a little Western town and were married in secret, as a sort of a lark. We neither of us stopped to think. I don't blame Jarvis, not even for growing tired of me."

"Ursula!"

"No. For I'm not cheerful or clever or dashing. But I could have made a home for him, and cooked nice things for him, and brought the children up properly."

She spoke almost as if they were alive somewhere and needed her.

"Why didn't you *make* him acknowledge the marriage and keep a little home over you?"

"He really hadn't the money, Miss Hallam. We thought we could save it

by both of us working, and we tried, but couldn't. At least, I tried. But as I told you before, Jarvis grew tired of me very soon. Five months of happiness isn't much in a whole lifetime, is it, Miss Hallam? But that's all I have had."

"You're young yet, Ursula."

"And that's the awful part of it, Miss Hallam. I don't know how I shall stand all the years that are ahead of me. I couldn't fall in love again. *I'm all loved out*, Miss Hallam. And I know my heart is broken."

"Don't go off by yourself, Ursula," I begged, for she had risen. "Stay here with me."

"I must be alone, please. But thank you. You won't tell anybody what I've said, will you, Miss Hallam?"

"No."

"You promise faithfully?"

"Yes, dear."

When we had the lay-off, and Jarvis never came near me, I knew he was done with me. Do you remember I told you I hired a room where I could look at the river? I wanted to drown myself even then, but had not the courage."

"I won't let you be by yourself tonight!"

"Yes, for I'm not going to die. I haven't any poison, and there's electricity in the room instead of gas. Sleep without worrying. Good night. I'm glad *your* life is happy."

"Good night," I answered.

After she had gone, I could not be sure which was stronger—the pathos of her congratulations to me or the irony.

My sorrow, though, was only the fading of a fool's dream; hers was the death of a woman's hope. I suppose we both lay awake for the remainder of that night.

But in the profession, neither faded dreams nor dead hopes are as important as the catching of a train, and next

morning found us on board as usual, bound for a holiday matinée at Diamond Bridge. We all said, "Merry Christmas," to each other and showed our teeth in the proper smiles. Ursula was wretchedly pale and had black hollows under her eyes.

I wrapped up and went to the back platform of the rear car, trying to take comfort in the mountain scenery, but it was so dangerous and gigantic that I grew a little frightened, holding my breath each time we thundered across trestles. The wood of them seemed weak as matchwood, and the rocks beneath looked miles away. Next, we would be rattling around a curve close to the edge of a chasm.

"I knew you'd be here," said Lorimer, appearing and putting his hand fondly on my shoulder. "The depths, the distances, the infinite grandeur call to you, as they call to me."

"It made me afraid," I owned.

What to do about the hand familiarly upon my shoulder? For me to discourage it would be clear confession that I had mistaken his transcendental bosh for sincerity. Anything rather than such a confession!

"That is the woman of it—to be afraid of magnitudes," he explained ringingly. "But now that you have beside you your natural soul mate, man, is not the fear less and the inspiration greater?"

I glanced up at him to see if he were not joking, but he was as earnest and frenzied as a poet. The majesty of the scenery had kindled a corresponding majesty within his heart, leaving no atom of space for the small remembrance that he was a married man and I, as good—or as bad—as a married woman. He felt a soul mate and said so. Thus I argued with the Puritan who once had been I.

Unable to stop the action, I put up my hand and clasped the fingers of the strong hand upon my shoulder, becom-

ing immediately filled with a sense of well-being and riches.

"The best Christmas gift I have had this day, comrade!" he remarked fervently. "I know that you and I are meant to do a great work in the world. Suffer me and I will lift you to the top of it."

"The top is very blowy and lonely," I said stubbornly. "I'd sooner stay down where the people are."

"How many people do you need?" he asked angrily. "I intend to be at the top, too!"

"Then that's all right," I said, laughing a trifle sarcastically. "Polonius will make three of us up there."

"Come in," said Lorrimer gruffly. "It's beastly windy."

He took me back to our car and left me. I sat down in an empty seat and began thinking of Christmas Day at home. I was sure Aunt Josie had been making pies for days and days, and cranberry "jell," and turkey stuffing. The turkey would be in the oven right then, with his legs trussed to his stanch sides, and strips of bacon plastered down over his tender keel. And on the red-hot stove a black plum pudding would be frantically bubbling. All through the house was surely spice of evergreens. And there would be holly wreaths at every front window, with pots of home-grown chrysanthemums on the sills. And, oh, what a beautiful litter of post cards and letters and packages would be on the parlor table where the Christmas tree was! There would be neighbors running in with little gifts; and Uncle Lloyd would be dressed up in a boiled shirt and a starched collar; and everybody would go to church and put more money than usual in the plate, and come home feeling happy.

For perhaps an hour, I forgot the uncomfortable actual. When I finally reawoke to it and looked out of the car window, we were creaking ominously across a trestle a little worse than any

that had gone before; below, the gorge was appalling, making me dizzy to look at it.

Then something must have happened, for the brakes were put on with sudden force, causing a horrible grinding and trembling of the train. In a sickened way, I braced myself for a crash, but none came. We slid the rest of the way safely and came to a peaceful standstill on firm earth. I looked again out of the window and saw only the tall grass bent by the wind. Except for the fact of its being motionless, everything was evidently all right with the train. The song of the strong wind was the only sound outside.

Within the car, there was also peace. Most of us were drowsily reading. Tommie Maguire and Pettie were squabbling over a book, grabbing it laughingly one from the other. Lorrimer was making notes on the margin of his time-table. The quiet lasted for several minutes, during which the engine panted rhythmically and the steady wind blew. Then the conductor came into our car, looking for some one. He finally stopped before Lorrimer and bent down and whispered to him.

"Great God!" I heard Lorrimer say. He rose in his seat and wildly surveyed the car. "Where is Miss Frede?" he asked poignantly. "Find her, somebody, for God's sake! I can't believe it! I won't believe it!"

"I'll get her," said Miss Maguire, jumping up. "I know where she is."

"Bless you for a dear little girl!" half sobbed Lorrimer, his face clearing radiantly. "Where is she?"

"On the back platform. She went there about fifteen minutes ago. She told me she wanted some air."

Miss Maguire started to go, but the conductor held her back; and Lorrimer dropped with a groan, hiding his face in his arms.

Grown ashen-hued, Pettie slowly stood, his fingers working convulsively.

But then the rest of us were as horror-stricken. One person's anguish was not more noticeable than another's. Without being told, we knew that Ursula was hurt or dead. There was no other way of accounting for the staring pallor on the conductor's bronzed face, or for Lorrimer's complete collapse.

"Let me go to her!" I said chokingly. But again the official barred the way. "Tell me what she wore, lady," he said grimly.

"A gray suit and hat and white furs."

Lorrimer had raised his head to listen, and the conductor, catching his eye, nodded confirmingly.

"Oh, why don't you let us go to her?" I pleaded.

"The body can't be reached, lady. It's down in the gorge. The young woman flung herself off the trestle when we were about in the middle of it."

"Don't say 'flung!'" raved Lorrimer. "The thing was an accident! Miss Frede had not a sorrow in the world. She was a gentle little creature, timid of her own shadow. She could not have—"

His tongue refused to finish it. On our ears the terrible past tense, the "was," tolled like a death knell.

"Some of you gentlemen come with me, please," ordered the conductor, waiving argument. "And this must be kept from the other coaches. We have a holiday crowd on."

There was no hardness in his tone, and no lack of sympathetic respect in his attitude; he was simply obeying rules. And a holiday crowd, though the best crowd in the world to render help, is one that naturally hates to be dampened needlessly.

Our boys filed out after the conductor. For the first time in my life, I felt admiring compassion for all men, seeing that their manhood is not only a pass-key to unbridled liberties, but the badge of an order which is faith-

fully pledged to answer "Ready!" to the call of desperate duty.

We watchers and waiters inside the car could do nothing but sit in stunned misery, striving impossibly to hope against hope, calling upon superstition to prove the whole thing a nightmare dream and to let us presently awake to find things as they used to be—to see Ursula among us, coiled up in the corner of a seat, with her masses of colorless hair shading her pale little face.

But I, who had looked from the window into the depths of that horrible chasm, could have screamed aloud at the vision that haunted me—a vision of a broken little creature in gray and white, lying on the cruel rocks below, with her sad story hidden forever in her heart.

Presently the engine shrieked, and we moved onward, gradually gathering speed until we were flying at the usual rate. This moment was even worse than those which had gone before, because, except for the certainty of horror in the situation, we knew nothing definitely, not even if we were traveling away from our poor little companion or had her body with us. Then some of our boys came back into the car. One look at their shocked faces confirmed the worst.

Old Walter Vivian alone had self-command enough to tell us what we dreaded to hear, yet had to.

"We went to the edge of a cliff and looked down, and—our little friend is there. We, who are finite, may wonder why it pleased Providence to take her from us in this most dreadful manner, but surely we can bear to think that she was called home on Christmas Day."

He paused to remove his glasses and rub them carefully and long; and in his faded brown eyes was the look of puzzled acceptance seen only in the gaze of the very old and the very young.

"The train crew tapped the wires,



"We were married six years ago, when I was about seventeen." She was talking unemotionally, like a hypnotized person repeating given sentences.

and there is a special car to be sent from Diamond Bridge, with doctors and—and whoever else are needed," he continued, picking up his thoughts without much sequence. "For we couldn't reach the poor little girl; we were required but for the service of identification. Mr. Vallerga and Mr. Derry were asked to remain at the scene of sorrow until the relief train arrives, and they have done so."

"And Jarvis Pettie, too?" I asked, unable to keep back the question.

The old man shook his head.

"Mr. Pettie, who evidently is sensitive beyond my conception of him, fell into a state of hysteria culminating in semiunconsciousness. Maurice is caring for him in the smoker."

"Why do you not permit us to hold the hope that the unfortunate girl may be found alive?" asked Fernanda Mel-

lis, no longer apart and a star, but a very human, weeping woman.

Mr. Vivian's only answer was to clench his hands and droop his courtly old head. But it was conclusive response. Fernanda Mellis covered her face and was led back into her drawing-room by Miss Dove who—a strong believer in bottles—was hovering wretchedly about with spirits of ammonia, smelling salts, and whisky in her incapable hands.

During the quick journey into Diamond Bridge, Miss Maguire stared rigidly and unseeingly at the flying scenery. Once in a while, she would mutter audibly through her set teeth:

"She was white. She was white all through."

Arriving at the depot, our car was met by some of the city representatives of the line. They gave their assurance

that the special had already been sent out and that the remains would be cared for with all possible respect; in return, they asked us to keep reticent about the accident, at least till publicity became unavoidable. The town was filled with patrons and pleasure seekers who were entitled to all the consideration we could give them—so they put it.

On the platform we were met by Marcus Aring, our advance man, who had remained in Diamond Bridge to "whoop it up with us for Christmas." With polished silk hat set rakishly on his glossy black hair, in a new astrakhan-trimmed overcoat, he was the personification of Christmas cheer, as what handsome young Jew is not at Yuletide?

"The house is sold out for both performances!" he cried triumphantly. "I've worked like a dog! Hullo, people! Simple Mug's the last to leave the car, quite as usual!"

Maurice Lorrimer took him by the arm and spoke to him in a low tone. As the speech proceeded, Aring slowly lifted his hat from his head, the smile frozen on his face.

We women pulled down our veils and walked to the near-by hotel. I do not know what the others did, but for myself I dropped down on the bed and lay there wrapped in ghastly, useless thought. We had arrived in Diamond Bridge at about eleven o'clock, I suppose, and at one my telephone rang persistently.

I answered it and received this curt message in Lorrimer's voice:

"Report at the theater immediately."

Sure that the summons concerned the tragedy, meaning, perhaps, a service over the recovered body, I hurried to the theater, shocked inexpressibly to see the town blazing with posters of "The Woman Heart," the store windows alive with our photographs, and found Timothy Gedge and his men setting the stage as usual.

"Get out of me way!" hissed Tim, trying to shove past, rolling a tree trunk in his hairy hands.

I was more afraid of angering Tim than of angering any one else, and had cause to be afraid, but this time I was quietly desperate.

"Please tell me what you are setting the stage for," I begged, tears crowding to my lashes. I caught his shirt-sleeved arm and hung on.

"Best be gettin' to y'r room and makin' up," he advised, gruffly trying to be gentle. "The guys what own this opery house don't dare close it to-day—they say. It's a new house and a new circuit—they say—and they have as good as spent the money already took in—they say. So the guv'nor's agreed to give the show, coffin or no coffin."

I let go of Tim's sleeve and mechanically hunted for my dressing room, expecting to find there a contradiction of his statement, but, instead, found confirmation; for Miss Dove was in part possession and was in a state of unbalance which closely approached insanity, she having to go on in Ursula's place.

"And the poor angel not cold yet, Miss Hallam! How does this skirt fasten, dearie, front or back?" she asked, half dressed and half made up, pulling Ursula's wardrobe about in a businesslike way that made me heartsick, though I could see that if we were to raise the curtain at two o'clock, there was no time to be wasted. "Did you know that the boys came back with her? Yes, dear." Miss Dove uncorked a bottle, shut her eyes, and took a restorative gulp of something. "She's in the undertaker's parlor, all ready to be shipped to her brother in Kentucky, who's wired on for the body. Gawd, what a Christmas present! And we can't even look at the poor darling. She's as bad as that, my dear. Hook the back of this infernal belt, there's a dearie. Pretty sort of a trade we're

in, ain't we? When we have to play right on top of a corpse. But there was no way out of it. Lorrimer's been in seven places at once every minute since we got here, working wires and phones till he's run up bills long enough for a colony of pelicans. Nice sort of a performance *he'll* give! And Jarvis Pettie has gone nuts on fainting every time a person turns her back. He makes me sick! He never looked at the girl when she was alive, and now she's dead, he's playing to the gallery by making believe he's cut up! Say, dearie, where did she keep her jewels? In this?"

Holding a stick of grease paint aloft like a candle, Miss Dove bent over Ursula's stage trunk and jerked the lid from a large box. In the top of it, lying on a new embroidered towel, a little doll smiled up at us.

"No, not in that," I said stoically, and closed down the "hope chest."

By now I was in a condition of apathy; things had become so bad that a trifle more or less made no difference. Moreover, I never thought the play would go through to a conclusion, for I could not possibly see how this hatchet-faced woman, with her vulgar voice and more than indifferent collection of charms, could assume Ursula's rôle and not be "guyed" from the stage, even had the rest of us been up to our usual standard. And I quite welcomed the smash-up that my fancy pictured.

But none came. I learned that no person is really indispensable anywhere. Actors come and go, but the play goes on. To Diamond Bridge, our "show" was "fine." The audience laughed, wept, applauded at all the proper places; and, since they had been apprised of the fact that Miss Dove had taken the part at a moment's notice, they gave her more applause than Ursula had ever received.

It was nearly half past five when the final curtain rang down, and we hurried back to the hotel, there to make a

wretched pretense of choking down a Christmas dinner; then we all went to the undertaker's parlor, threading our way through streets still thronged with merry-makers, hearing "Merry Christmas!" from many a stranger's lips. There were stars in the sky, and yet an inconsequential snow was falling in big, wandering flakes that sailed around as if on pleasure trips and melted jokingly away as soon as they touched earth.

Lorrimer had engaged the services of a pastor—a thoughtful-faced young fellow, who, prayer book in hand, stood beside Ursula's coffin waiting for all of us to arrive. Flowers had been impossible to obtain, and on the casket lay only a cross of dark evergreens.

Finally, with the appearance of Marc Aring and San Vallerga, we were all assembled, and Lorrimer bowed to the pastor in signal to begin.

But the worry on the young fellow's face deepened.

"My vows of office place me in an excessively painful position," he said at last. "Since I've been standing here, I've heard comments which certainly disprove the theory of accidental death."

"Well, sir?" demanded Lorrimer, his great eyes suddenly aflame.

"In the ritual for the burial of the dead, I am forbidden to read service over one who has laid violent hands upon herself."

Complete silence fell. The minister's utterance added the final touch of horror to the circumstances. Before, I had always looked upon the burial service as a sort of painful necessity rather than as a glorious benediction; now I felt that Ursula's future life depended upon her getting it.

"A minist'ring angel shall my sister be when thou liest howling!" quoted Walter Vivian automatically.

A second silence fell, broken by Lorrimer, who ringingly demanded:

"In the ritual for the burial of the dead, are you forbidden, sir, to lend your prayer book to a strolling actor?"

"I am not," quietly replied the pastor, placing the open volume into Lorrimer's imperiously extended hand.

Then was the burial service read with grandeur indescribable.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in Me shall never die!" read Lorrimer, throwing into the words such power and pathos that the despair in our hearts melted away like the gentle snow outside.

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling; hold not Thy peace at my tears. For I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

And we felt no longer homeless and afraid, but as children of one house; wanderers, perhaps, but not lost and not forgotten.

"Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of her heart. Shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer, but spare her, Lord most holy. O Lord most mighty, O holy and merciful Savior, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer her not at her last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee."

From our eyes the futile mist of tears departed, and in our throats the anguished knot was relaxed. "The peace of God which passeth all understanding" took possession of us and renewed our strength.

At the place where the Lord's Prayer is to be read, Lorrimer paused and looked at the minister. The young fellow, evidently glad of the chance to perform a duty which did not conflict with his conscience, went on his knees and feelingly offered up the petition to its majestic close—"glory forever. Amen."

The minister's words were the last to fall upon the silent ears of the dead. We left her alone with the echo of

them, and went out into the street again, hurrying to the theater for the night's performance.

Perhaps it had been a good thing for us that we had had no time to think, for, when the play was over, and the townfolks had gone to bed, and the town lights went out, and only the stars remained awake, when we were shivering in the deserted station waiting for a midnight train that was an hour late, we found out to our cost that leisure can be anything but a blessing. What to say or do, none of us knew. The waiting room was as cold as a morgue, for in the rusty, stained stove the fire had gone out. The dirty floor was strewn with peanut shells and discarded slips of paper, drawn from a weighing machine which promised, "Your correct weight, your fortune, and a tune—all for one penny." In this pigpen of unrest, poor, worn-out Dick Derry dropped asleep, with his suit case as a pillow.

He woke with a scream that terrified us, sending the men clustering about him.

"I thought I saw her, as she was when we found her!" he gasped strangledly.

Miss Dove, who had already extracted a flask from her ulster pocket, was about to press it upon Dick when she chanced to see Pettie's ashen face; so she offered it there, instead.

Jarvis Pettie drank heavily.

"Want to be left?" asked Tommie Maguire of any one and every one, as she jerked up her valise and walked off with it.

Our train had thundered in.

We boarded it. When we were surging through the stuffy gloom of the sleeping car, hunting our berths, my hand was gripped commandingly, and in my ear sounded Lorrimer's voice.

"Come! Say good night to Ursula!" was his quick, queer whisper.

I went with him to the vestibule,

whose doors were not yet shut, and as our train pulled slowly out of the dark depot, there, on its platform, I saw lying, unguarded and alone—just a piece of eastbound freight—a white pine box with an evergreen cross upon it.

Lorrimer lifted his hat.
"Good night, little girl."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Dove had one of those penny-royal natures that are most fragrant and satisfactory when trodden underfoot, and success made her so insupportable that she was treated to the painful, but salutary process known as "canning," receiving back her position as understudy and maid with a silent hauteur that necessitated the uncorking of many bottles.

The person who was engaged to take her place was a slobberingly soulful young woman named Victoria Kean, a "Unitarian," firm-nosed relative of Marc Aring's, a girl with big white teeth like a horse, with big brown eyes like a cow, with an overwhelmingly fine figure—almost too good to be true, but true for all that—and with a penchant for indulging in rhapsodized allusions to the "superman," the "alter ego," the "oversoul," and the "under dog." She was tiresome and a nuisance if taken seriously, but harmless when properly ignored; and she really made quite a hit in her part.

It was Dick Derry who put the final quietus upon her attempts to elevate us.

"My spirit's motto is, 'Strive, for Art's sake.' What is yours?" she asked him one evening in the wings, standing very close to him and palpitatingly tip-toeing up and down, her oversoul evidently taking a squirm.

"Mine's 'Plug, for Dough's sake,'" he answered, turning on his heel.

"Don't believe him. It's 'Dig, for Mun's sake,'" interpolated Tommie, likewise turning on her heel.

"Hustle, for Mike's sake!" hissed

Timothy Gedge, entering the contest quite by accident and scattering us with a side of scenery.

We had much less uplift from Victoria after that.

January and February slowly passed, and uncertainty in regard to the play passed with them, recording one triumph after another for "The Woman Heart," bringing the dream of a Broadway run nearer and nearer to a reality, bringing us, too, nearer and nearer to Stroudstown for a night's performance.

All this time, Terry and I had been corresponding in the usual misfit manner of two travelers, one letter never by any chance answering another, and every third missive going astray.

Pricked by the righteous spur of New Year's resolutions, I had written to him, confessing my unworthiness of his loyal devotion and restoring to him his freedom. His apparent answer had been a glowing account of the progress of the little house, and an earnest request for me to "quit junketing" and come and have a look at it. Resignation and acceptance not being Terry's characteristics, I failed to understand the circumstances till later, when my heart-throb letter came back to me from the dead-letter office, via the New York dramatic agency, having doubtless furnished amusing light literature all along the line. This taught me the advisability of restraining my emotions till they could be conveyed by word of mouth.

Then came Ash Wednesday, with its spiritual exhortations to self-sacrifice, and I prayerfully made up my mind to be to Terry the helpmate that he wished and needed. So I again put on his ring.

Terry being one of those men who grow more lovable by reason of being well out of the way, I managed to slide back into the ruts of affection. Safeguarded by proper distances, I felt I could get on with him forever. And how did I fit Lorrimer in with this

feasible scheme of thing? God only knows. I placed myself in the class with Polonius and took turns with that snaky little beast in furnishing Lorrimer relaxation and diversion. Sometimes the weasel was prime favorite, sometimes I.

"I am writing a play for you," he confided to me one evening. We were sitting on our trunks in a musty depot. It must have been in Georgia, I fancy, for his boots and mine were splashed with red mud.

"Oh, I'm not clever enough to carry a whole play!" I cried, flattered and flustered.

"Did I say you were?" he inquired, glaring at me till I wilted. "It's my play that is to be clever enough to carry you," he explained, smiling at me till I revived.

After all, the only braggart to be despised is he who fails; the braggart who makes good is a hero. And Lorrimer had been making good. In the beginning, "The Woman 'Heart'" had been derided by critics and public alike. Producers had been frightened by the expense of it, managers by the allegory of it. Yet, supported only by his belief in himself, working against odds with a heroism that would have won him world-wide respect in any other profession but the theatrical one, Lorrimer had had the grit to profit by the criticisms, to treat the public as educators, and to shape his drama anew after each defeat; till now the cavaliers themselves were becoming interested, and the luke-warm were dropping the "luke." Requests for new plays began to pour upon him.

"What is my play to be about?" I asked.

"You will know when the time comes," said his majesty. Then, pensively viewing her where she sat apart, "Fernanda is growing old."

I, too, looked at her, and he was right. "Growing old," that death sen-

tence to an actress! Poor Fernanda! Just where or when the curse had actually fallen was hard to say, for she had been young enough but six short months ago. And was not her voice as sweet as ever, her waist as flexible, her hair as beautiful? Could it be possible that a slight thickening of wrist and ankle, a slight sagging of the cheek, could turn a star from an "is" into a "was?" The cruelty of it! Last fall I had seen in her a woman who was a dynamo of irresistible power for good or ill, a genius rocketing toward a goal. The rise and fall of her bosom had indicated a sex force capable of setting men by the ears and destroying the peace of other women. Insensibly I had been waiting for this force to break out and manufacture drama and tragedy in real life. But now the potentiality of her was over. She was remarkable only for what she had already achieved.

I wondered if all the rest of us would "peter out" in the same blank fashion, like a "continued-in-our-next" story of which the final chapter was lost. Would Vallerga never compose his symphony, Dick never do anything dashingly good, Tommie never do anything dashingly bad? Would my farce episodes with Lorrimer never attain the dignity of the real?

I harked back over the past half year. We had worked like slaves at something that was only mimicry at best; we had traveled thousands of miles and learned nothing; we had spent a fearful amount of money and had bought mostly debts; yet the future lured us onward.

Now that Lorrimer had suggested writing a play for me, I was crazy with anticipation. Why should I not succeed? Had not Blanche Bates been an obscure San Francisco school-teacher, Ethel Barrymore a demure convent maiden? There was plenty of precedent to encourage me in the hope of some day being able to command a salary of five hundred dollars a week.

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"Ambition is eating you," said Lorrimer, who had been watching my reverie. "But don't ever dream of soaring away from *me*. Your flight is to be upon the eagle's back, and I am the eagle. If you try to get away from me in mid-air, you will only be dashed to death upon the rocks of earth."

"Why, I never thought of getting away from you!" I cried, quite heart-wrung at the accusation, though a few short months ago I would have been hypercritical of his words and have called them "flummery."

"Will you be of the same mind when you get back to the owner of that?" he asked, tapping my ring with a belittling carelessness.

"Stop!" I said, feeling as if he had filleted Terry on the nose. "Mr. Powers is one of the real people whom we are only imitating! When he gets angry, it's not to bring down a curtain, but because he has had true cause for anger; when he laughs, it's not to win applause, but because his honest heart has been pleased; when he weeps, it's not to play upon the emotions of an audience, but because that honest heart has been hurt!"

"Then he has had extra handkerchiefs in his laundry if he has kept his eye upon *you* of late," said Lorrimer dryly. There was somber fire in his eyes.

"Maurice, it was ungenerous of you to say that!" I stammered, the tears crowding to my lashes. So his love scene in the sentry box had been a consciously experimental one! I slid off the trunk and tried to go.

"Comrade, have you not learned that a man has to stab the thing he loves?" asked Lorrimer, restraining me by the hand, turning my ring around and around in his fingers. "The coward does it with a kiss, the brave man with a sword." You have vaunted your Terry's honesty to me; personally I think that honesty is noisy and ill bred. But

if you are in the mood for honesty at this moment, I shall treat you to a sample of my own, here on this infernal public station platform, with a battered stage trunk for a divan, with curious onlookers for a Greek chorus, and with ill-smelling Georgia mud beneath our feet in place of roses and daisies.

"I happen to love you. I am not able to offer you a marriage ceremony, or my name, or a home, so I have made no pretense of it. If Nature were the sane goddess you seem to think she is, she would destroy my love for you; instead, she fosters it by every move she lets you make. I love you not only because your skin is velvety and your lips soft, but because your youth is the conservation of my own. So long as a man can make a girl love him, he is not old. Comrade, what shall we do about this love of ours? You have raised the issue; now face it. What shall we do?"

"You are not manly," I said, trying to wrest my hand from his without attracting attention.

"In leaving the issue to you? I am manliness itself. For me to speak further would be to insult you."

"I think you have already done so."

"By what words?"

"Saying that you wanted to love me in order to keep alive your own youth."

"Is that an insult? Your Terry probably loves you in order that you may be his housekeeper, bear his children, cook his meals, darn his socks, lessen his expenses—and you are complimented. I ask you to restore my youth and keep alive my ambitions—and you are insulted. Your Terry says to you, 'Love me, and I will pay the bills.' I say to you, 'Give me love and I will pay with love, the only honest price.' I ask you to perform the spiritual duty of loving me, and you boggle over it. Are you not pure enough of mind and soul to love a man without desiring to marry him?"

"Why—why—" I was "boggling"

indeed. From the arraigner I had become the arraigned. "It's not sensible for us to be talking this way. Let's drop it all and be friends."

"Be friends!" The feminine slogan of indecision! Women can't bear to cheat themselves of the fun of taking a man to the edge of a precipice. Not one in a thousand has courage enough to jump in with him; not one in ten million has generosity enough to back him away from it. As you will, woman. We'll be friends."

He was forced to this inartistic climax by the arrival of our train. Later, to myself, while huddled in the plush depths of a double seat, I went over the conversation, trying to detect the sophistries of it, but, unable, pushed the whole away from me with the muttered consolation:

"In a few days, I shall be in dear old Stroudstown. Then I'll beg Terry to marry me before I go insane again."

And when the few days came to their end, we reached Stroudstown and Holy Week together. Our Saturday night's performance was, therefore, the last one for seven days. We were to lay off that week without pay, a prospect more cheerful for me than for the others, I being able to take refuge with uncle and aunt.

It turned out that uncle was suffering from an attack of rheumatism, and since it swelled him more than it pained him, I was glad of the attack, for it kept him and auntie away from the theater and gave me the opportunity of one night more of comfortable sybaritism, for I took a room in our big downtown hotel—"in order to be near the opera house," was the way I put it to them.

Terry wired me from Scranton that he would reach Stroudstown on the seven-forty-five, and for me to wait for him at the back door after the performance.

The knowledge that he was in front

made me act with unusual fire and success. Round after round of applause followed my speeches, and I glowed to think of the pride that Terry must feel in me. I wanted him to see that he was not raising a beggar maid to be his queen, but lifting a goddess down. I knew that there were old schoolmates in the audience, too, and hosts of other friends to be amazed and delighted. Triumph in the home town is the sweetest triumph of all.

Then the final curtain fell and I exchanged my cloth-of-silver draperies for a street gown, and met Terry at the back door. Though he kissed me, his eyes glittered cold as the stars in the night sky above us.

"This is the last night of *this*, Gert!" he exclaimed masterfully. "Where can we go to talk?"

"Ta-ta, Monroe County," said Tommie Maguire, passing me, arm in arm with the town gambler, her already high skirt held higher in one bediamonded hand.

"A pretty profession, placing you on terms of familiarity with creatures of that sort!" blazed Terry.

"Come to my room at the hotel," I advanced hurriedly. "We can talk there quite in private, and I have a lot to say to you, Terry dear."

"To your room?" he asked incredulously. "Gert, are you crazy?"

"Quite," I assented, wearily remembering Stroudstown respectability. Conventional respectability and indecency of thought were remarkably alike—it seemed to me.

Then Lorrimer's tall figure emerged through the stage door, and I welcomed the interruption.

"Mr. Lorrimer, this is Mr. Powers," I introduced rapidly.

Terry drew his heels together with a belligerent click and raised his hat.

"Charmed to meet Mr. Powers," said Lorrimer mellowly, then promptly excluded him from the conference. "Com-

rade, you acted well to-night and pleased me." He put his arm round my shoulders and drew me nearer the managerial benediction.

I saw Terry's fist clench.

"Good night, Mr. Lorrimer," I hinted definitely.

"I must see you to-morrow, comrade."

"Miss Hall has an engagement to keep with me to-morrow!" ripped out Terry.

"All day?" asked Lorrimer with quiet sweetness.

"All day!" Terry tore the words off like a yard of gingham.

"How distressing!" murmured Lorrimer, magically intoning the conventional regret so that it managed to convey commiseration for me in my promised predicament. "And yet who knows what a day may bring forth? Good night." He left us.

"The fool!" said Terry, chafing.

"How is your work getting on, Terry?" I begged.

"It's a fortunate thing your good aunt was spared the mortification of witnessing this abominable show!" he said, as if in answer.

"What do you mean?" I bridled.

"Exactly what I say. The show was disgusting. If it had any sense at all, it concerned itself with themes too indecent for speech."

"Why, Terry!"

"Why, Terrying' me doesn't alter the truth of what I said. It makes me sick to think of all the grins and leers I'll have to stand from Tom, Dick, and Harry, who have seen you in such shameless costumes and know you are to be my wife!"

"I don't have to be!" I stammered, too furious to speak distinctly. "I give you back your freedom this very minute!"

"Gert, you *are* crazy!" he said slowly, his voice sinking to depths of real tenderness. "As if it were possible for

either of us to go back on a sacred promise! Why, dear, the little house is built!"

"Built?" I echoed, with the agitation of one who has just heard a life sentence pronounced.

"Yes. I knew you'd be surprised and overjoyed," said Terry, ascribing my emotion to the cause he considered proper. "I was keeping the news as a treat for to-morrow, but you forced my hand. Gert, how long do you usually hang around the back door of a theater?"

"Never a minute," I answered, nervously starting to walk onward. It was long since I had been so hectored in regard to my speeches and actions. I hardly knew what to do and what not to do in order best to keep the peace.

But even obedience did not seem to suit Terry in his present mood, for he very soon laid a masterful hand upon my arm, checking my pace.

"Let's decide upon a destination before we pelt helter-skelter to nowhere," he announced firmly.

"We might go to Heisler's," I suggested hopefully. Heisler's was a place where you could get a sandwich and a glass of cold ale.

I had forgotten that Terry was a pillar of the church, and that pillars did not go around where ale was—at least not under a strong electric light.

"Are you really less pure than you were, or are you only trying to startle me?" asked Terry heavily.

"Less pure" was more than I could stand.

"I'm going to leave you till you come back to your senses," I said, stiffening. "I'll see you to-morrow. Good night. I'm off to the hotel."

"As if I could possibly let you go there by yourself at this hour of the night!" he cried, walking by my side, though "pelting" is the best word to describe the pace I set.

His words made me wring my hands angrily together inside my muff. Man certainly knows how to wrap his conscience up in cotton wool, keeping it safe from jolts till such a time as he chooses to take it out and wear it as an ornament for an hour or so! Not proper for me to walk to the hotel by myself indeed, when I had been buffeted all over the United States without a whimper from him, just because he hadn't happened to see it! And I not "pure" because I mentioned a place where beer went with the sandwiches!

In rankling silence, Terry walked me to the hotel. Then each of us grabbed up amiability as a shield against the other, and agreed to meet next morning in front of our new house.

I should have lain awake all that night, but did not, sleeping instead with a restful solidity.

"Infernal nuisances!" I muttered, on being aroused next morning. I anathematized the sounds before fully recognizing them as church bells, and made no mental retraction even then.

After breakfast came a series of farewells, given mostly in the hotel lobby.

"So long, for one week," said Jarvis Pettie, extending a nervous hand to me.

"So long," I answered, taking the hand and glancing furtively at the base of his thumb, looking for traces of powder. The boys said that Jarvis had taken to "sniffing" cocaine. "What are you going to do with yourself?" I asked in a tone more earnest than the one I generally employed with him.

"Oh, going to keep a little date with the devil," he answered, pulling his hand away. "Can I take him any message from you?"

"Yes, Jarvis. Tell him to be easy on my friends. *Please*, Jarvis!"

"Why, you don't care for me any too much, do you?" His hazel eyes were slightly bloodshot, and his paunchy young cheeks were not as pink and

white as usual, but showed sallow in the morning sunshine.

"No. But I cared for Ursula, and she cared for you," I answered, not daring to look at him. "So if you can pull yourself up for her sake, do it."

"I'll look you up in New York."

"Letting the devil wait?" I pleaded. And the "devil" that I saw had blue eyes and black hair.

"Maybe."

He rushed madly from my side, not so much torn by emotion as lured by sight of the street car which would take him to the depot. This sight was one that blessed the eyes of pedestrians only infrequently in easy-going Stroudstown. Small wonder that Jarvis rushed.

"'Parting is such sweet sorrow!'" lilted Victoria, unpleasantly close to my ear. She was tiptoeing soulfully up and down by my side. Some one had once told her that she swayed like a lily, and it had done for her.

"Not always," I answered. "Goodby."

I beamed at her to show her that here was a time when sorrow was lacking, for she, too, was flitting to the Mecca of Manhattan. Her cousin, the "shining Marc," was waiting for her at the curb.

"Adieu, Pthora," she said, fervently uncovering her big white teeth in the smile that critics had termed "dazzling," for there were men standing in the hotel lobby looking at us.

I abruptly left her, walking into the parlor, where I had had my epoch-making interview with Lorrimer the year before.

And he was there now. He and Fernanda were seated upon a divan, and talking business. Fernanda was hatted and cloaked and heavily veiled; this last she always was when the cruel sun was shining.

On the point of irresolutely walking out again, I was halted by Dick Derry and old Walter Vivian, arm in arm, the

one straight as an arrow, the other bent, the one treading on hope, the other fighting off despondency.

"Cheer up, governor! A week's vacation is a godsend!" cried the young man radiantly.

"On no salary, sir?" asked Vivian, trying to bluster, but not succeeding, for Dick was pressing his withered arm very affectionately. "And who is to pay the board bill?"

"The billboards!" answered Dick triumphantly. "Live on credit, as I do. Or, better, spend the week with your friends."

"I wish that I could, sir, for they are dead."

"Oh, come now, governor!" said Dick helplessly.

"Mr. Vivian, I'd love to have you spend the week on the farm—with me and uncle and auntie," I said, almost bleating it in my eagerness.

"In the country?" he asked, with tragic disdain. "Sit myself down to rot, *rot*—when two hours' journey would take me to the Players' Club? Almighty God, what an idea! But I thank you from the depths of my heart, my dear. Richard, my boy, do not let me be late for that damnable train."

"On the road to Mandalay," sang Dick, starting off, after a nod of winsome farewell to me. His happy, virile baritone hinted at, not one, but a dozen "Burma girls a-waitin'," yet he was not so full of them but that he guided the



"Miss Hall has an engagement with me to-morrow!" ripped out Terry. "All day?" asked Lorri-
mer with quiet sweetness.

old man's steps like a son. Perpetual lovesickness is a very humanizing malady.

Watching them all go to New York made me feel dreadfully lonesome.

"Till we meet again, Miss Hallam," said Fernanda Mellis, pausing on her way past me. Her large eyes burned into me so that it is a wonder they did not make holes in her thick veil. "Till next week, that is."

"It is for longer than that," I suddenly said, seeing a million things in a minute, the way a drowning person is said to do. There was her closed limousine waiting for her just outside the glass doors of the lobby; there was thin, disranked Elfin Dove, half actress, half

maid, standing beside it, asking ingenuous questions of the bored chauffeur; there was Lorrimer at my elbow. "For much longer than that, I think, Miss Mellis. I have been engaged to be married for over a year, and now my fiancé wishes me to leave the stage. I am to meet him in a very few minutes—at the little home that he has built for me. He will press me for a definite answer—"

"And he must have it," broke in Fernanda, grasping my hands with quick sympathy. "If there *be* such a thing as 'home' on God's earth, child, take it and give hourly thanks for it."

"You will lose your train," murmured Lorrimer, using a voice of ivory and gold.

She kissed me quickly on the cheek and went, he going with her. I heard the limousine chug off.

The floor seemed to rock beneath my feet; and, feeling physically and mentally like a castaway on a raft in mid-ocean, I sat down quickly on the nearest sofa and stared concentrattingly at my twitching fingers, trying to fight down an actual nausea of misery and shipwreck.

"And now what train shall *we* take to New York?" asked Lorrimer, as he very casually sat down beside me. I had not heard him come back. I had thought him gone.

"What I said to Miss Mellis *was* true," I answered, not looking up, for fear of betraying my relief and delight.

"It might have been true a moment ago, but no sooner was it said than you perceived it to be an error of judgment."

"It pleases you to be satirical."

"It pleases you to think me so."

"I *am* engaged to be married."

"Naturally. To become engaged to be married is the usual pastime of the unemployed. Now, I offer you employment. I need you at my right hand to inspire and cheer me. Every great man climbs to his height over the votive

body of some angel woman. I need you to be that angel woman."

"Gert Hall" would have thrown back her head and burst into girlish giggles over the balderdash of this, or would have departed furiously from the subtle insult of it; but Gertrude Hallam, knowing that Lorrimer always sounded more of an idiot and Lothario than he really was, waited eagerly for what might come next.

"All night, I shall write and write," went on Lorrimer, glaring New Yorkward to his to-morrow's self. "All morning, I shall sleep and sleep. And all afternoon, I shall want to talk and talk—to you—the plot, the characters, the scenes, see my success prophesied in your glowing eyes. And when I am o'erwrought and desponding, I shall need to feel your tender hand upon my hair, shall need to hear your voice—'ever gentle, sweet, and low, an excellent thing in woman'—thrilling me onward and upward."

All this time I was remembering that he had three wives somewhere. And the fact was naturally one of which he himself would be cognizant. Yet the circumstance was apparently not sufficiently dampening to diminish the present ardor of either of us. Since his new play was to be for me, I knew that he was quite sane in wishing to talk it over with me as it went along. As for the "tender hand upon his hair," there was a good deal of poetical symbolism about that, and very little probability; for when he was "o'erwrought," he would not be at all likely to mount five flights of stairs and come to see me in madame's sky-parlor bedroom, but would be very much more apt to go off somewhere and play pool.

"It's all very well for you to spend your vacation in New York, for you have hosts of friends there," I said stonily. "Why should I leave my home just to be on hand when you need to be thrilled onward and upward?"

"Because you love me, comrade," he explained caressingly.

"Loved," not 'love,'" I threw in with haste. "I'm going to marry Terry. What you ask is too much claim to press upon a past tense."

"The past tense of that particular verb presses *and* grants a great many more claims than the active present," mused Lorrimer, taking a time-table out of his pocket and furtively consulting it. "Marriage testifies to the death of love. While love lives, nobody ever dreams of getting married. Marriage is proposed, and accepted, in the lame hope of resuscitation."

"Oh, Mr. Lorrimer, be real for just a moment!" I broke in. "And listen to me, for I am saying good-by. I don't belong to the theater or to cities; I am only a country girl. While on the road, I've learned much—and suffered much, Mr. Lorrimer—but it's over now, and I'm going back to the life I'm fitted for." During my words, we had both risen, in a state of repressed excitement, and had strolled to the big center table, where we stood pretending to glance at the newspapers, in order to bluff any chance inquisitive passers-by. But nobody paid any attention to us. The best privacy is to be found in a crowd. "As for the new play, there are hundreds—thousands—of other girls who can take the part. You won't need me. You'll forget me five minutes after you've parted from me——"

"You are judging, are you not, from the length of time that *you* will be faithful to *my* memory?"

"Oh, Maurice, I'll remember you forever, and you know it!"

"That's all I wanted to hear," he said, smiling in a delightfully relieved way. "Now trot along, child, and have your interview with your Terry. I've noticed that, after an intimate interview with your Terry, you are always pleasantly disposed to do as I ask you. As for my *not* needing you, that is sheer

bosh—sheer Japanese bosh. Remember what the poet tells us of the many suns it takes to make one speedwell blue! There is a perfumed petal of my heart that needs you and you alone; no other sun can warm it unto life."

"Good-by," I insisted, wanting to cry.

"Look at yourself in the glass yonder."

I hurriedly looked, fearing lest I might be making wry faces, but was relieved to see that I was a modish and, indeed, striking young personage. The hotel mirror reflected me from head to heel. To be modest is not necessarily to be a fool; so what is the harm in saying that the mirror reflected a girl who was astonishingly handsome?

"Anything wrong with me?" I asked blankly.

"Nothing, but much righted. Is that the girl who, last year, came into this room in cheap slippers, a flimsy-wimsey cotton gown, with really devilish glass beads around her throat and a positively damnable bow of ribbon on top of her head?"

"No, no, it isn't!"

"Certainly it is not! Nor is it now that you are in masquerade, but then! Now you are your rightful self. Before, you *thought* glass beads, you conversed in glass beads! A man couldn't talk to you for one minute without being choked off by having one of the infernal, cheap, prim globules rammed down his throat. Give yourself to me for six months and at least I'll teach you how to talk. Ha! I see a thought glimmering in your eyes. Speak it out. What is it? A glass-bead thought?"

"It is sorrow that you will not let yourself be natural for at least long enough to say good-by."

I put out my hand in farewell, and he took it in both his own, sending a current of electrical comfort through me.

"You want me to speak as my natural self?" he asked, almost quizzically, tuning his trained voice to its deepest,

sweetest tones. "Then it is not 'good-by' you would be saying, comrade, but, 'With you, Maurice, to the end of the world.' Shall I speak as my natural self?"

"I see what it is that you're trying to tell me," I stammered at length, made strong and courageous by his touch, "and I respect you very much—and thank you. For I see that it was—is—I that am insincere, not you. Without really knowing it till now, I've been trying to coax you to say things that would be lies or worse. I've grown to like you very much, and it hasn't done me any harm, but good. I know you could teach me to act, and perhaps I could help you to write, but though the partnership has a nice sound, it would last only till you grew tired and needed another type. Then I would be a very lonely woman, Mr. Lorrimer, and a disappointed one, and perhaps a misunderstood one, so I'm going to——"

"Marry and be a buried one," he finished roughly, quite throwing my hand away. "By the way, where is this tomb that the gentleman has kindly put up for you?"

"You mean the house?"

"The quickness of your translation shows that you have been mentally employing my own expression for it!"

"On the corner of Elm Avenue and Bank Street."

"Elm Avenue? That's the cattle path that ambles through the cow pasture?"

"Yes."

"And Bank is the street where the new bank is going to be and the livery stable *is*?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll show up there in my car in about an hour's time. That will enable us to get to New York before pitch dark."

I laughed.

"Terry will be there. He'll have to be reckoned with about that," I observed dryly.

"Unless I mistake my Terry—your Terry—he will have made you pay the reckoning to the last cent long before I arrive!"

With this, Lorrimer turned on his heel and strode off to a long-distance telephone booth, shutting himself in behind its glass door.

I drew a breath of positive relief. With his disappearance, the last one of the company was gone, and the whole uncanny spell of my acting experience was gone, too, vanishing into the safe past like an unwholesome dream, leaving me free to pick up my real life at the point where I had dropped it.

Therefore, with a heart that—I insisted—was lighter than it had been for many months, I left the hotel and walked buoyantly onward to keep my appointment with Terry. The town looked very pretty in its Sunday dress of extra cleanliness, and what with the home folks going to church and the early tourists going for strolls, the one business street had quite a cosmopolitan air. Metaphorically I patted the town on the back, magnanimously forgiving it its few shortcomings and generously pledging myself to help it along all I could with my lately acquired width of knowledge. For I honestly felt myself to be a much more valuable citizen than I possibly could have been had I not gone away and seen larger places and thought wider thoughts. While my former girl friends had been learning new crochet patterns, I had been learning that life is too broad to be safely generalized about, especially from the pulpit. Just as white flowers will often "sport" and be pink ones in certain dark soils, so may men and women vary from a colorless standard and yet be responsible only to God who placed them where they grew.

In Stroudstown it does not take much walking to get away from the business section, and I was soon on that rural thoroughfare lately stigmatized as a

"cattle path." Well, it wasn't exactly that, nor was it exactly the "avenue" that it claimed to be, but a street of many vacant lots, all strung together on a valiantly continuing strip of asphalt paving. It was accounted a choice residential locality for hard-working young married people whose more elegant aspirations were—perhaps fortunately—checked by small salaries. The few homes already erected tried hard to copy the bungalows of the wealthy, and, not able to have garages, thriflily compromised on having chicken coops. Lastly, one's garden never meant anything but one's vegetable patch; though of course one had a lawn and plenty of flowers around in the front, where people could see them. But unless you lessened market expenses by growing your own tomatoes, you were not adjudged a fit helpmate for a rising young man.

And now I was at our lot, Terry's and mine, where, upon the tiny brick foundation I had seen last year, a frame house was at last standing, a house in that horrible intermediate stage of paint known as "the first coat," which is as scarifying as the first stage in the recovery from smallpox. And, oh, how tiny the place was, how squat and squeezed in, with a porch no bigger than a rat trap, where doubtless Terry would sit in his shirt sleeves, his feet on the railing!

The worst of it was that Terry would consider the place quite spacious, for no other reason than that it was *his* place. I could hear him walking around the hollow inside of the house right now, making very masterful echoes.

"Hullo!" I remarked cheerfully, as I ran up the short flight of stairs and entered. "Hullo" expresses much in general, without committing a person to anything in particular.

"You're ten minutes late," frowned Terry, taking out his watch to be exact. "Twelve and a half. Hullo, Gert."

"Is this room as large as we planned it, Terry?" I asked, almost in consternation. The low ceiling seemed to threaten to fall and crush us both. As for the air—I went to a window and raised it quickly.

"Very little difference," he assured me loftily, going on to explain that wood was bought in assorted standard lengths, and that if your architectural fancy went six inches beyond this length, you added to your expenses alarmingly. Whenever a conflict had arisen between his plans and his purse, he had shaved his plans. He drew this all out on a piece of paper and made me look at it. I made up my mind to ask no more questions. Terry never enlightened my mind to any other purpose than to make me wish I had remained ignorant. There are others like him.

"There isn't much room for furniture," was the next remark that slipped from me, we having meanwhile gone through the domicile from front to back, being now in the kitchen.

"As we haven't much furniture, I call that fault a mighty good one!" roundly maintained Terry.

"The kitchen is larger than the parlor," I discovered.

"As it should be!" tutored Terry, an ugly look coming to the corners of his mouth. "See here, Gert, don't you like the place?"

If he had not bridled so and glared so, I think I could have been and would have been kinder. As it was I said stubbornly:

"It looks cramped."

"It's you that's cramped!" he ripped out. "You've changed disgustingly, Gert! I'd like to know what's the matter with you."

"Let's talk outside," I begged. It seemed horrible to desecrate the new place with a quarrel.

"I'll talk right here!" said Terry, banging the sink.

"Then you'll talk to yourself," I said,

opening the back door and going out. Without stopping to admire the clothes poles, which were already in place, I flew around to the street and, just as I expected, met Terry face to face, startled into gentleness.

"What is it, dear?" he asked dazedly.

"I don't know," I gulped, fighting down a lump in my throat. "Terry, I don't think I'm domestic."

"But you were, before you went out with those infernal barnstormers," he muttered.

"I couldn't have been. There must have been something wrong with me from the beginning," swallowing down sob after sob. Here in the open air, with the wide blue sky above me, I saw how dreadful it was that I could not enthuse over the tiny dwelling. But I could not, I could not!

"In 'the beginning' there wasn't a purer, more modest girl in the world."

The mortuary melancholy of inflection that he put upon the words "pure" and "modest" stung me like a slap.

"By that you mean to insinuate—" I stammered, enraged.

"I'll not insinuate. I'll talk plain," he answered.

His lack of grammar annoyed me more than all the rest. Yet it subtly soothed me, too—as to the outcome, that is—for if a man were weak in his word terminations, would he not be likely also to be weak in his moral deductions?

"That fellow Larriper, or Lorrimer, or whatever he's called, figured in the rottenest divorce case of the century and then married the infamous cause of the whole rumpus. I suppose you know that?"

"His private life has nothing to do with his public one, Terry."

"That's twaddle. It has. And I don't see as a divorce case can be considered *private life*."

"Oh, Terry!" If he only had not

used "as" in that manner! "All this is neither here nor there."

"It's very much 'here,' and I'll show you. That peak-nosed freak of a chap you call Pettie is a morphine fiend."

"Is he 'here' also?"

"You let me finish. That Elf thing drinks."

"Not to excess."

"For a woman, one drink is excess enough."

"Why not for a man?"

"Talk sense, Gert!"

"It takes two to make sense, Terry, for if you can't hear it when I talk it, then it's thrown away. Have you any other arraignment to make?"

"The worst. Another woman in the company has earned a name too vile for me to repeat. I can't even mention her."

"Then why have you done so? Why have you mentioned any of these?"

"To show you that they are not the sort of people you can be with and still keep nice."

All this time we had been strolling up and down the asphalt walk with proper Stroudstown Sabbatarian slowness; we might have been two loving pigeons strutting proudly in front of our new dovecote. I am sure the occasional pedestrians who passed us envied us.

"So I am not nice?" I asked, with dangerous blandness.

"Not as nice as you were."

Here I was aware of detecting something elusively familiar about a whistling youth who was approaching us with a broad grin on his face, the grin being evidently for me, though as yet I could not place him except that my subconscious memory recalled a cup of weak coffee and his weaker face above it.

He paused when he came up to me and pulled his cap, by way of sufficient salutation.

"I hoped I'd meet you, Miss Hallam,"

he said, widening his grin. "I seen your name on the show bill, and I said to myself, 'I bet it's her!' You don't remember me, do you?"

Then I did.

"Weren't you a bell boy in a queer little hotel—out West——"

"Yes'm," he answered hilariously. "But I'm a traveling news agent now. I quit my job at the hotel the very week you and your husband came there in the middle of the night."

Terry's glare focused on me till it burned.

"That gentleman was not my husband," I announced, as casually as might be, quite aware that the admission cast an extra shade over an episode already sufficiently shady in its outward appearance.

"Why, I mean the one that carried you upstairs—you was that sick—and waited on you all night, and then rushed you off at five in the morning——"

"I know," I threw in hastily. "But he was just a member of the company, who played the good Samaritan in time of need."

"Is that what he played?" questioned the bell boy dubiously, evidently doubting me all along the line. "I thought he played that sort of a dago prince in the first act."

"I mean that he proved himself my friend," I explained patiently, "at a time when I needed one badly."

"Oh, I reckon a show girl, a stunning one"—this with a bow to me—"can always pick up a friend!" This last with a comprehending wink at Terry.

Fortunately for his own cranium, he whistlingly passed on. Terry's clenched fist lowered slowly. I cast a frightened look at him. His face was ashen.

"What am I to understand by what I have just heard?" he asked through his set teeth.

"The simple, natural truth—that I was very ill one night on the road, and

that Mr. Pettie was kindness itself to me."

"A man's 'kindness' does not drag a girl's name in the dirt!" said Terry, clenching and unclenching his hands.

"It is not dragged," I panted furiously, "except by you and people like you! People who are such narrow-minded slaves to convention that they prefer to see wrong rather than right in any situation that is a little out of the humdrum ordinary!"

"That whistling lout will tell his story to Tom, to Dick, to Harry!" groaned Terry. "By night, the whole town will know it!"

"What is the story? What is there to know? And I am sick of hearing of Tom, Dick, and Harry!" I raved. "Don't be a cruel fool, Terry!" Yet at the same time I knew that what he feared was extremely likely to come to pass. "Listen to me, and I'll tell you exactly what happened!"

Then I recounted the brief incidents of the night in question, and concluded by asking:

"Where is the story in that?"

But I knew the futility of the query even before he answered. There was something so perpendicular about the crease in Terry's Sunday trousers, something so rigid in the set of his natty, tightly buttoned coat, such a cast-iron something about the faultless knot in his expensive satin tie, that one could imagine nothing else but that the man beneath was as wooden and unbending as the tailor's dummy that he looked.

"Even ill, you should have stopped to think," he muttered restlessly. "Why didn't you ring for one of the maids?"

Realizing that I would not help matters by explaining that the maids all considered me a risky character, and wouldn't have come, I naturally fell back on irrelevant sarcasm, the prop we all snatch at when the staff of truth fails:

"Oh, why didn't I ring for the lunacy

commissioners and send them on to examine you?"

But Terry was not to be lured into a fight on the side.

"Gert, I'll stand by you," he said at last, taking off his hat as if at a funeral. "Changed as you are, smirched by gossip as you are, I'll forgive you. I'll marry you, Gert, as I promised, and in the healing sanctuary of our little home, will try to forget that you ever mixed with libertines and—"

Well, Terry said the word right out—that terrible word applied to a woman that only a man is cruel enough to use.

"You mean Tommie Maguire," I said, suddenly and amazingly championing her. "Well, I saw her do a generous deed that you wouldn't do—saw her give her last dollar to a poor old man and not even let him know it—saw her do a womanly deed too hard for me to do, when she held a little dead baby in her arms. And if I should go to her now asking for food and shelter, she'd break her last cracker in two for me and take her clothes off her back to keep me warm, without asking a question—that's the point—and utterly disliking me, too—that's another point."

"But you are not going to her!" cried Terry, absolutely sickened by hearing me speak well of her, though he had not flinched from speaking ill. "There is no need! I haven't cast you off, Gert! Didn't you hear me say that I'll forgive you, that I'm still ready to marry you?"

"Keep your forgiveness for some one who needs to be forgiven!" I said, passionately angry. And even more than anger there was consternation in my heart, seeing how the neat-souled Terrys of the world have absolute power to brand a luckless woman by a shake of their thick heads, or to whitewash her with a wedding ring. "Just to give a little excitement to this quiet Sunday interview, tell me what you think you have to forgive?"

"This very style of talk of yours, Gert, if nothing else—your easy mention of Heisler's last night, your glib championship of a"—again he spoke Tommie's vile title—"the sort of clothes you dare show yourself to the public in—all so shameless, so different from what you were!"

"Different, maybe, but how dare you say shameless? Am I a drunkard because I've learned the taste of wine? Am I a sinner just because I've learned to be charitable to sin? Have I lost my modesty because I've learned the immodesty of too much of it?"

"Oh, hush, Gert, hush!" he implored, as if beseeching me to abstain from ribaldry. "Nothing to forgive? Why, you know this town as well as I do!"

"Yes, and, knowing it, I am going to leave it!"

"You are going to stay here and become my wife!"

"Terry, can't you see that we would only make each other miserable?" I asked, struggling with sobs. His last words had touched me by their unexpected gentleness. "I know I do you a horrible wrong by breaking our engagement at the eleventh hour, but I would do you a more horrible wrong by keeping it."

"You must let me be the judge of that," he replied, parting completely with his hectoring manner and speaking with manliness and touching gentleness. "We can't make each other miserable unless we try, and I for one am not going to try. Gert, when you left here—and it was only last year—you were a home-loving, domestic, shy, affectionate little girl, with right ways of speaking and thinking and—dressing. I'm going to take chances on the return of that little girl, once she forgets the mountebanks she was thrown with—my little girl for whom I have built a nest of a home."

Wiping away the tears that were beginning to roll down my cheeks, I

turned and looked at the half-painted little tub on stilts, liking it better now that he had called it a nest. Who expects a nest to be enormous? With my horribly easy faculty for carrying out a grotesque simile, I had a vision of Terry flying out of the tiny front door—like a wren—on his way to business in the morning, perhaps perching for a second on the frail rail of the toy veranda. And I laughed hysterically.

"That's right, Gert, cheer up, and put your hand in mine. Then don't worry over the rest. Leave it to me."

"Terry, you are too good for me." I was honestly crying again. He might be a wren of a man, but he wasn't a vulture. That much was sure.

"Put your hand in mine, Gert. Tell me that we're going to settle down in this wee nest and be happy."

Touched to the heart by his continued tenderness, I hesitatingly extended my hand, only to lower it immediately upon hearing behind me the sound of Lorrimer's car. Instantly I was assailed by the breathless sensation of having to catch a train with not a minute to lose, being obliged to decide everything in a flash of time. I must do one of two things—stay or go. And it isn't only when a person is drowning that the brain lives a lifetime in a second. I lived two lifetimes.

On the one hand, what was there? There was Terry—the man whom I had promised to marry, whose ring I wore, whose money had gone into the little house; Terry, who already heard the voices of his children echoing around the tiny shanty, turning it into a palace and a home. There were my duties—the call of the wife, of the mother, of the home maker. There was the beckoning garden inviting me to plant the roses; the warm brown earth waiting for me to sow it with seeds of hope, that it might bring them all to blossom and to fruit in time. There were Aunt Josie and Uncle Lloyd, growing feebler

as the years passed, with no one but me to be a daughter to them.

On the other hand—what? A troublesome and restless pilgrimage into a future that meant only disappointment, disillusionment, and debt. If I lived, I would be oftener hungry than fed; if I died, I would be forgotten before the curtain rose on the evening's performance. My "friends" would thunder past me in the night, leaving my dead body upon the station platform. (Oh, Ursula, Ursula!) Old age would come to me, not as the guerdon of the years, but as a leprous plague fitting me for nothing but isolation. Life would go on flatly like a continued story without a plot, a thing full of bathos and anticlimax, nobody caring if it kept on or if it stopped. But, oh, God, the *maybe* of it, the *maybe* of it!

Whrr! And Lorrimer's car came to a standstill, though its engine throbbed drunkenly on, seeming to shriek to me that time and gasoline were both precious and that I had better hurry.

"Ready, comrade?" asked Lorrimer in a melodious shout, lifting his hat most winsomely to Terry.

"I—I think I am," I murmured answeringly, even though I knew he couldn't hear me. He smilingly banged open the car door, and I felt a rush of red come into my cheeks.

"So that's it!" said Terry gratingly. "You love that man!" This was his translation of the sudden flush. "You love that married and remarried scoundrel! You are another of the dupes of that immoral windbag! You are going to leave town with *him*!"

"Oh, don't, don't!" I begged wretchedly. "Hush, Terry! You have no right to speak so of a person you don't know and can't understand! You have no right to suggest such a terrible thing of me, to me! Am I going to leave the town? Yes. With him? Yes. That is, we take the same train! He's writing a play for me. I must try it!"

"We want to start before midnight, you know," cheerfully megaphoned Lorrimer through his hands. He knew well what was going on between Terry and me—not even a fool could have misread our faces—and, knowing, he threw in his little word. The joy of contest made him look youthful and beautiful. He was the god of my car of destiny.

Terry glanced from me to him, then from him to me again, seeming to see us both in the glares of the fires of hell. Shudderingly he stepped away from me.

"Gert, I would sooner have seen you dead, dead, than come to this!" he groaned. His face was ashy white.

"This? What do you mean?" I stormed. "You're driving me insane!"

"By 'this,' I mean—" He stopped, on the verge of something very dreadful. "Oh, Gert, you're a traitor to your word, a liar to me, a betrayer of everything sweet and womanly!"

"I am different, but I can't help it, Terry!" Unhappy, hot tears crowded to my eyes. "Indeed I can't help it! I've grown out of my old self, and I can never be that old self again. Being on the road has taught me a great deal—"

"Taught you? It has robbed you! Robbed you of your shyness, your sweetness, your delicacy of thought!"

"But the loss has made me a broader and better woman—I'm sure of it, Terry. No, I have not been robbed. But I have paid the toll of the road, Terry. I don't think any person goes free. Almost every day, I came to a gate that said to me: 'Give up this prejudice,' or, 'Part with that silly convention,' or, 'Throw away a little finicky niceness if you want to get through.' Yes, I'm traveling lighter than I did. I know it, I know it! Yet the road calls me. Perhaps it has something for me. I must go see. I must say good-by."

"I curse the road!" said Terry, clutching his two hands. "The toll it took belonged to me! I loved it in you, and I wanted it in you! But you've paid it away! You were right in saying that—you've paid it away!"

"Good-by for a week or so, anyhow, Terry," I temporized, offering a hand that was not taken. "Do be reasonable. You and I are not necessarily murdered and buried just because I'm going to New York for a few days."

This time limit was set by my lips alone. My uneasy and prophetic heart knew that the days would be more than a few before I wandered back to quiet Stroudstown of cast-iron morals.

"Time's up!" shouted Lorrimer.

I ran to the car and jumped in beside him. He slammed the door shut with triumph and exuberant good nature.

"I knew you'd come," he admitted in an undertone, and laughingly. "I banked on Terry talking on my side—unwittingly and unwillingly, of course, but doing it." He started his car at full speed.

"When will we be in the city?" I asked, glancing up at the dull sky.

"God knows!" answered Lorrimer, with his usual radiant indifference.

"Will madame be able to take me?" I next asked.

"God knows," he replied again, absolutely uncaring.

"Where are the rest of the company going to be?"

"I don't believe even God knows that," he replied, all abeam.

Intending to take a last look at certainties, I slowly turned my head.

"Don't look back," ordered Lorrimer. "Don't you know it's bad luck?"

But he spoke too late. I had looked back.

And there was Terry, with his face in his hands and his head sunk low upon the new gatepost of the little house.



HOME COOKING

By
**WINONA
GODFREY**



A Little Tale that is Full of Truth. Or isn't it?

SEEMS darned queer," growled Henry Flick to his friend Whitson, as they sat at breakfast in one of these "regular" cafés, "that people who make a profession of cooking can't even turn an egg *over* without getting it frizzled around the edges and mealy all the way through."

"'S queer," said Whitson, who merely ordered eggs and ate them calmly in whatever state they arrived.

"And if," continued Flick eloquently, "you say, well, *don't* turn it this time, there it'll be scorched on the bottom, probably, and all raw and glary on top. Why, good lord, at *home* eggs come on just delicately glazed top and bottom and yet *cooked* all the way through."

"Fine," said Whitson.

"And look at this coffee!" Henry followed his own request bitterly.

"Man made it, so let it pass for coffee," said Whitson, making cheerfully free with Shakespeare.

"I'll tell you," Henry went on ear-

nestly. "I'm not a gourmand or what you call it, but it certainly gets a fellow, after eating around like this a while. It sure makes you think of what you used to eat at home. Say, it makes you want to elevate *home cooking* to one of the arts."

"I've been doing this so long I don't pay much attention any more. But say, Henry, I'll have my sister ask us out to dinner. She's a good old-fashioned cook. What do you say?"

"Bully!" cried Henry. "You tell her it'll be a treat to me."

Duly Whitson and Henry presented themselves at Mrs. Driggs' hospitable table. Henry ate heartily and praised everything, and the conversation ran mostly on the charm, healthfulness, and pricelessness of home cooking. Mr. Driggs became quite boastful over his own advantages. He had only to "eat out" occasionally to appreciate doubly what fellows who do it all the time have to put up with.

Henry said Mrs. Driggs had given him strength to go on with life a while longer, and she urged him to come again soon; it was a pleasure to do for anybody who enjoyed things.

Henry also expressed his gratitude to Whitson, but in telling Robinson about it the next day, he had to laugh.

"Of course it was awfully nice of the Driggs' to have me out, but, to tell the truth, I don't think Mrs. Driggs is any humdinger of a cook. Why, her roast was cooked to a frazzle, and she had an awful queer flavoring in the soup. I don't care for sweet salads and I never eat parsnips at home."

"Hardest thing in the world to get a decently cooked meal," Robinson agreed. "Say, come out to the house some night, Flick, and I'll give you a *feed*. Mrs. Robinson doesn't do the cooking herself, but she's sure got the know-how. And she's drilled it into Katie, I tell you! Bet there isn't a better cook in town than Katie. All our friends are trying to steal her."

"Try having me out, do," urged Henry.

"Call it Thursday," said Robinson. "If that isn't agreeable to the missus, I'll let you know."

Thursday it was. Great anticipations. Mrs. Robinson was a thin, blond person, and the cooking was just like her. Henry suspected that the soup was merely hot water slightly flavored by the temporary immersion of Katie's large, healthy, and distinctly unsubtle thumb. The chickens were Mrs. Robinson's fowlish prototypes, thin, pale, and large boned. Henry had never tasted asparagus done just that way before, and he hoped he'd never be asked to again. Now lemon pie can be lemon pie or it can be simply an epithetical lemon. There was also an ice, of which the less said, the better. It tasted like the last lump of snow left on the fence after a spring shower.

Robinson praised everything highly.

He said he seriously felt that he owed a good part of his business success to a simple, nourishing, home-cooked diet.

"It's the *personal* touch, Flick," he explained. "At home you get that. You get things cooked according to your personal taste, your individual needs. And from the well-organized home kitchen you get a balanced ration that keeps you in fighting trim. Now, did you ever eat such lemon pie?"

Henry confessed that he positively never had.

Having suitably expressed his gratitude to his host and hostess for the meal of his gastronomic life, Henry left the house with Brown, a fellow guest.

"I was certainly amused," chuckled Brown, "by those remarks of Robinson's about home cooking. Why, that man doesn't know what home cooking is. Mrs. Robinson is a pleasant woman, but as a cook—oh, boy!"

"To tell the truth," said Henry, "I'm hungry this minute. I dare you to go down to Jack's. Irish bacon and scrambled eggs, and a little cream ale?"

"You're on!" cried Brown.

When they said good night, Brown wrung Henry's hand cordially.

"Look here, Flick, I want you to come out to the house and dine with us some night. As soon as Mrs. Brown gets home from the country. I'll guarantee *she'll* fill you up! No bacon and eggs after she's done with you! I'll phone you."

"Do," said Henry.

Mrs. Brown explained that she was no food faddist. She believed in eating what you like cooked in the way you like it. She was just an old-fashioned plain cook, and she just felt sorry for men who had meals served to them that were all frills and no substance.

The Browns were what is called hearty, and it was one of those dinners where everything is served in chunks or gobs suffocated in thick gravies. What wasn't gravyed, was mayon-

naised. Mr. Brown grew hilarious over the time he and Flick had dined together before. He thought Flick wouldn't order bacon and eggs *to-night*. Flick didn't. The very thought of bacon and eggs made him seasick for a week.

His mother said his letters were pathetic when he wrote about the way city people eat. If he could just taste some of her baked ham and gingerbread again!

Henry was by now somewhat wary of men who took him up when he heaved a sigh for home cooking. He was, however, inveigled into going home with Smith one night.

Mrs. Smith was a firm person who had studied food values. We all eat too much and not the right things or not prepared in the right way. People are too careless or too self-indulgent in these matters. A little thought— If Mrs. Brown's dinner had been in gobs, Mrs. Smith's was in dabs.

But suddenly Henry lost all interest not only in cooking, but in *eating*. He fell in love. She was a pretty, plump little girl named Pearl McGrew. The McGrews were an easy-going outfit who ate what they darn' pleased. Pearl was twenty-five, and the family were getting a little anxious, so they welcomed Henry Flick with open arms and a standing invitation to dinner. Henry did not keep track of all the meals he ate at the expense of Papa McGrew, and never gave a thought as to what they were like. He couldn't have told next day on a bet whether he had dined the night before on turkey or codfish. That's what being in love does for you.

When Whitson, with whom he had been in the habit of "eating around," missed him so much that he asked if he had gone to "boarding some place regular," Henry replied dreamily: "Oh, no." Adding, "You know, Whit, I used

to do a lot of beefing about cooking and all. That's a mistake. It's really unimportant. A person shouldn't bother so much about mere eating. The things of the heart and spirit are what really matter."

Later bulletins from Flick proclaimed him engaged, then married. Hiatus. Then one day Whitson was hailed by a well-fed-looking and happy Henry who clapped him on the back.

"Whit, I want you to come out to the house and have dinner with us! I want to give you a treat. Believe me, I know what this eating around means. Home cooking! That's the stuff! How about Friday? Suit you?"

"Delighted," said Whitson.

"I expect some feed," he remarked later to a friend. "You know Flick's a regular crank on this cooking business. I bet he picked a wife that can beat a French chef fifty-seven ways!"

Mrs. Flick, he found, concealed her efficiency under a dawdling air and a good many giggles. The only thing she said about dinner was that they had been lucky in getting a cook who was just fine if you let her alone. During dinner, Whitson could not help wondering what would have happened if she had been interfered with. He praised everything, so Flick wouldn't be embarrassed, soon discovering, however, that he might save himself the trouble. Flick was delighted with each and every dish. He kept asking Whitson if things didn't have a different taste from "feed-store stuff." "Home cooking—" he observed—*ad infinitum, ad nauseam*.

As Whitson walked back over to the subway, he smoked a very black cigar and marveled much.

Suddenly inspiration tapped him on the shoulder and whispered enlighteningly in his ear:

"My boy, home cooking is like heaven—a state of mind!"

Motion: Muscular Expression: Rhythm

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

WHAT is more beautiful than the American flag swaying in the breeze, than the undulating wave of a field of rye, than the sweep of the sea, than the swift leap of a panther, than the sinewy flight of a bird, than the lines and movements of a thoroughbred horse? Why, the wondrous coördinated movements of a perfectly developed human form under perfect mental control—because the human body is the highest and most perfect of forms, in which all form in the universe is summed up.

Although the early Greeks proved by the beauty of their physical stature their recognition of the indissoluble bond between mind and body, we of to-day approach the matter with halting steps. We want to improve, we want to be symmetrical in outline and attractive in face and form, we sigh for beauty as we yearn for happiness; yet we fail to realize that within each of us are the elements of beauty, but that we can develop these only through expression, which is dependent entirely upon the *motive apparatus*; that is, upon the muscles.

The soft tissues, of course, assist the muscles in creating wrinkles, folds, outlines, dimples, and so forth, while the

nervous control gives to the eye, for instance, not only its varied movements—it is the most muscular organ in the body—but its wide range of expression. So the muscles of the face are related to the brain, and to every internal organ, through their nervous connections. Were it not for this interrelation of brain and organ, nerve and muscle, there would be no more beauty or variety of expression in the human face than we see in that of a dog or horse.

The same thing is true of the entire body. Every motion, every gesture is indicative of some underlying motive, or, we might better say, characteristic, so that the outline exhibited by each individual is a summing up of his character. Every one knows that the attitude habitually assumed, both in action and in repose, are indicative of the man. The movements of the body in walking, the gestures of the limbs and hands, with the set and motions of the head, are all-revealing signs.

The absolute ugliness of most gestures that are unconsciously made never seems to occur to those who are guilty of them. A favorite "trick" is to clap the palm of the hand over the mouth after having uttered an unseemly remark, or to wink the eye knowingly for





the same reason, or to nod the head vehemently in emphasis. Tricks of manner, such as shoving out one shoulder to direct another's attention to a given object, or a sidewise thrust of the thumb for the same purpose, are awkward, ungainly, and inappropriate gestures that usually spring from ignorance. Stupid persons are more restricted in their movements than the more enlightened, who think and feel more, and therefore express more through a greater mobility and plasticity of the body. One's habitual gestures, movements, walk, and attitude reveal one's status in society.

Now forms are produced by the law of motions. Therefore contour and motion must be the first consideration of those who are interested in a beautiful development. In its normal state, the muscular apparatus will produce perfect curves in every outline, motion, and movement of the body, hands, even the vocal cords. It is the deviations from normal types—due to vitiated ancestry, perhaps, or disease—that result in angularity, defectiveness, or even criminality. Here there may be obliquity of vision—as in crossed eyes—or angularity of the head, which should be rounding; there we may see a slanting of one foot or

an extreme slope of the shoulders, or a crooking of the mouth; again we find a devious, winding, serpentine gait, or else a purposeless, unintelligent shuffle from side to side; angular gestures, or awkward, half-curving ones. One might enumerate these deviations indefinitely; their lack of grace, beauty, and aptness is well known.

There is always an attempt on the part of nature's forces to produce harmony, equilibrium, and symmetry. Therefore those who are handicapped in this respect—not by nature, but by disease or by parental ignorance or ancestral inheritance—can do much toward improving a defective musculature, if the laws of motion are systematically carried out in coördinated movements—that is, movements in which the mind as well as the body is occupied. Indeed, it is only when motion is intelligently directed that we get true beauty.

The prevailing impression that it must conform to certain mathematical measurements is a fallacy to which Nature herself gives the lie.

Cold beauty of form and outline are seen in the statue, but motion—*life*—color, and an infinite variety of expression caused by the play of emotions are lacking. It is the living, pulsating body,



Physical Self-Expression.



A movement based on Atalanta's race with Hippomenes.

whether in motion or in repose, that exhibits in its movements a thousand beauties. The Southern races are notoriously facile in emphasizing their conversation or talk with gestures; the entire body *speaks*, as it were. Now it would be just as ridiculous for one without temperament to attempt an imitation of such spontaneous gestures as it would be for him to affect a foreign tongue instead of his own. We can work out only those laws of motion which are inherent in us, as, for instance, the bee, in making its cell, copies the hexagonal facet of its own eye, and the snake, in its motion on the ground and in coiling itself around its victim, follows the law of its own construction. So it is with individuals. Some are built on square lines; their motions are, therefore, not curvilinear, but none the

less beautiful, if intelligently directed. The ancient Egyptians were a highly angular people, judging from the art of their times. Some modern dancers—notably Mademoiselle Lubowska, the Russian, who has won fame by her wonderful angle dancing—have revived the straight line and the sharp corner or acute angle that characterized their motions. To those so built, practice of the straight line—of angles, squares, and geometrical figures, in place of the curve, the circle, and the sphere—will result in a beauty of its own. We of to-day, however, see little charm or grace in these motions. We prefer a wide sweep of the arm that embraces the universe to a narrow, confining angularity that makes jerky movements and "elbows" its way through life.

There is little to be gained in the way of true poise, of actual mastery over one's physical construction, by the cut-and-dried gymnastics generally practiced. These undoubtedly do some good, but they are extremely limited in their range of application and have a place in physical training on a par with the lowest school grade in education. When it comes to lifting the body out of itself from the ground, as it were, into the sphere of intelligence, of thought, of coöordinated action, we can develop startling possibilities. This is being splendidly shown by the screen work of Douglas Fairbanks. Others may be endowed with similar power, but have not his opportunity for demonstrating it.

Recognizing the value of his ability in this direction, Fairbanks has steadily improved the remarkable command he

is able to exert over his body, so that he is quite sure he will succeed in maintaining himself in the air without mechanical aid, simply by means of his muscular apparatus, for indefinite periods. The writer has no doubt of this. His leaps, bounds, the projection of his body through space, his skill in scaling precipitous heights, in vaulting open places, clearly indicate that mastery over his physical construction alluded to above.

Fairbanks' just popularity with every class demonstrates the fact that we love to see unusual achievement; we acclaim it, support it, and encourage it, but unfortunately few attempt to emulate it, and yet it is within the range of possibility for all. One need not, of course, take it up with the idea of becoming a public performer, but with the desire so to improve and beautify the physical as to make it a *living* joy. It is this conscious joy, sparkling, radiating, and pulsating through every fiber of Fairbanks' body, that even on the silent screen communicates itself to the spectator, causing quickened pulse throbs.

Now Fairbanks does not do his wonderful feats to music, although there is concentrated action, *rhythm*, in every gesture. His movements are so much more forceful than are required in everyday life that singing and music are not sufficiently powerful to aid him. He needs the *shout*—the loud, purposeful respiratory effort with which he accompanies his leaps and bounds—to aid him in performing them.

Now those of us who are desirous of obtaining *body balance*—a splendid command, poise, grace, and so forth—can gain these by means of rhythmic exercises. Much has been written on this fascinating matter in late years, and much has been accomplished in this field by various workers who have established summer schools at which young women are taught Grecian dancing. While the grace, the beauty of

action so acquired are remarkable, it is not necessary to attend summer classes in order to develop along these lines. Every one knows that exercise is essential to physical development, and that its value is trebled when performed out of doors. Accompanied by music or singing—even silent humming—a rhythm is imparted to each movement that lifts it out of the drudgery plane into the realm of joy. When all the muscles of the body play in this manner, undulating in response to inner rhythmic notes, the entire physique lends itself to improvement. Breathing is augmented; with each intake, fresh air is not only mentally, but physically, "hummed" to every cell in the body, the murmuring heartbeat being in itself a rhythmic h-m-m. Although we are never conscious of the body's pulsations, we thus assist and emphasize the ever-recurring inner mystic h-m-m, *which is life*.

Each one must gauge his own place and select the type of exercise on which to mount into those heights of physical joy and health which he can attain by no other means. And one is never too young to be taught—infants of three are good beginners—or too old to change "the even tenor of one's way." For instance, Colonel Smith, of Detroit, has encompassed a literal physical resurrection by daily running a given distance in joyful defiance of medical advice. Not only has he overcome impending disease and bodily infirmities, but he has so improved his physique and so youthified himself that, at seventy-three, he is pronounced a "physical marvel."

It is not for all of us to run; most of us would rather do joyous exercise in conformity with our inclinations, and this is as it should be. But—we must persist in order to bring about the desired change.

The drudgery of housework can in

this way be transformed into joyous rhythmic movements. Every motion of the body necessary in the performance of one's daily tasks may be made to assume the character of rhythmic exercises. Edgard Degas, a painter of our times, saw wondrous beauty in form and muscular movements as continually displayed by skilled workers. These he has immortalized in his art. Nothing was too humble. His large, brawny women, washing and ironing, give the same impression of beauty in action as the trained limbs of his dancers, springing high in the air or leaping and describing graceful arabesques across the stage. It was all one to him; a woman brushing her hair, another scrubbing herself with big, vigorous movements—in each he saw the marvelous rhythm of muscles playing steadily in conscious effort. This, however expressed, is beautiful.

For practice, to compel greater pliability and the ready response of muscle to nerve cell, various exercises should

be followed daily. If indoors, the accompanying illustrations show two of many that will suggest themselves to the novitiate.* Out-of-door exercises allow freer and broader scope, and here, too, singing, laughing, shouting, or the playing of small instruments give a zest to the movements that aid materially their development. Little bands of four and eight people, meeting daily for the avowed purpose of indulging in this form of higher physical culture, become so enamored of its delights that nothing is permitted to interfere with it, nothing is of higher importance. And surely there can be no duty greater than the first duty we owe ourselves—that of attaining perfect nerve and muscle control, resulting in a beautiful physical development.

*Beside these, a set of Grecian exercises to cymbal playing was published in this department some time ago. Readers can always procure back numbers by sending in the price of the magazine, which depends upon the year in which it was published.

WHAT READERS ASK

BESSIE MAC.—It is embarrassing to present one's self even in the circle of intimate friends with stained hands. Try the following powder: White castile-soap powder, 5 ounces; pumice powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce; kaolin, $\frac{7}{2}$ ounces; sodium perborate, $3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces. This is an excellent cleanser and bleacher. Lemon juice will answer nicely for all ordinary purposes.

Brittle nails are caused by housework and too much dabbling in water, more often than anything else. All housewives should wear gloves to preserve their hands. Sickness, by causing impoverishment of the blood and lack of fat in the system, also gives rise to brittle nails. Here is a good ointment to rub into them at bedtime: Oil of pistache, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce; refined table salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ dram; powdered resin, $\frac{1}{2}$ dram; powdered alum, $\frac{1}{2}$ dram; white wax, $1\frac{1}{4}$ dram; carmine, $1\frac{1}{4}$ dram. The hands should always be anointed with oil, or with glycerin, lemon

juice, and rose water, after each washing, being thoroughly dried of all water first.

A READER.—It will give me great pleasure to help you. Use the following mixture on the neuralgic surface every half hour or hour; I am sure it will relieve you: Oil of peppermint, 1 ounce; chloroform, 2 ounces; tincture of aconite, 4 ounces. In addition, look after your general health and keep your intestinal tract cleared.

PUBLICITY.—To make "beet rouge," select half a dozen ripe ruby beets, chop them fine, and put through a fruit press. To one ounce of pure juice add one-half ounce of alcohol or white wine. Let it stand for several days, and then strain through filter paper. Keep in a glass-stoppered bottle. Use a small wad of absorbent cotton to apply the rouge. Dilute with a little water until the desired shade is obtained.

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What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were, however, Is it dullness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it what? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane, Portia, and Ninoe, l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the sole quality of femininity? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. The nameless charm is found almost as often in the masculine, "advanced" woman as in the delicate, ultra-feminine damsels. In AINSLEE'S each month you will find the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherin lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign. Read about them in

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Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress August 24, 1912, of SMITH'S MAGAZINE published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1918:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the said county aforesaid, personally appeared George Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Smith & Smith Corporation, publishers of SMITH'S MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 41 of Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, managing editor, and business managers are Publishers, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; editor, Charles MacLean, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; managing editors, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; business manager, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Smith Publishing Company, 80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., a firm composed of Ormond G. Smith, 80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George C. Smith, 80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, or other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where a stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation whom such trustee is acting; is given; also that said two paragraphs contain statements embracing all facts material and necessary under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities, a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; that this affidavit has no reason to believe that any person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. Smith, Treasurer,
of Street & Smith Corporation, publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of March, 1918, Charles W. Osterberg, Notary Public, 51, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1919.)

Who will write the SONG-HIT OF THE WAR?

With this country entering its second year in the "World War," it is doubtful if the song which will be known as the "Hit of War," has as yet made its appearance. While it is true that War Songs as "Over There" and "Liberty Bell" have made immediate hits, we have "Bitter Sweet's" with "Lucky Tipperary," which has been the great favorite with the "Ex-Tommies." Inasmuch as several Commanders of our training camps have requested boys in the service to write such song it appears to be still wanting.

Have you a suggestion you think might be used as the subject for Patriotic or War Song? It would greatly secure our valuable information and assistance by writing for a Free Copy of our new booklet entitled "SONG WRITERS' MANUAL AND GUIDE." We revise song-poems, compose and arrange music, secure copyright and facilitate free publication or outright sale. Send your suggestion and we will send you a copy of our book.

KNICKERBOCKER STUDIOS 74 GAETY BLDG., N. Y.

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Not many to few

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AT ALL
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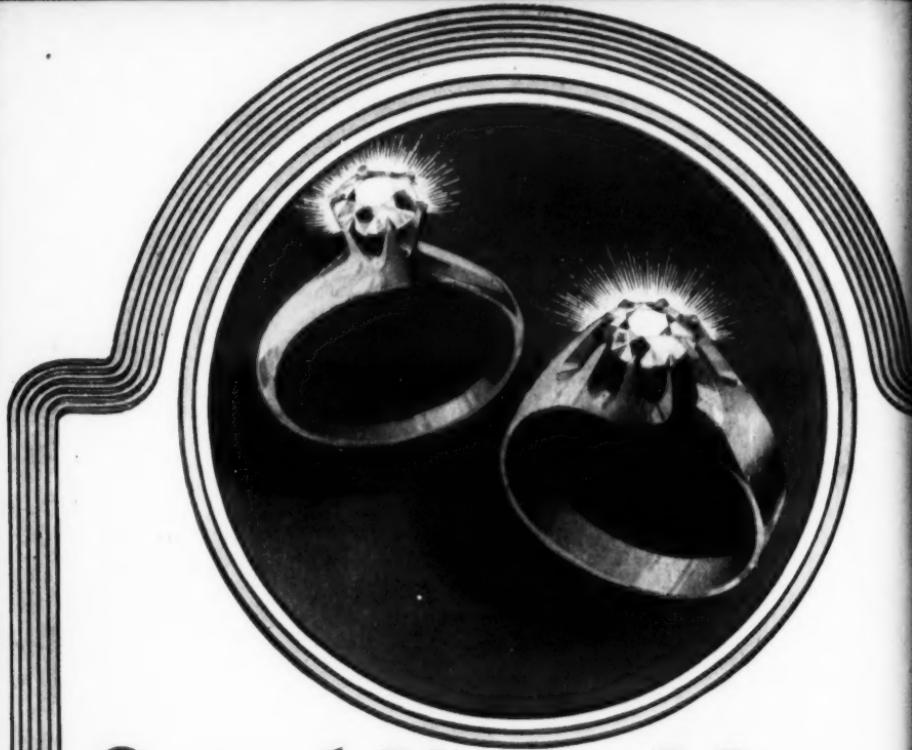
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